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METHUEN'S ENGLISH CLASSICS

SELECTIONS FROM DRYDEN

POETRY AND PROSE

Edited with an Introduction by

JOHN EARNSHAW, M.A.

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SELECTIONS FROM DRYDEN

INTRODUCTION

LIFE

THE incidents in Dryden's life are in the main the milestones of his progress as a man of letters earning a living by his pen in Restoration London. The bare dates are almost all that is known of the earliest period of his life. He was born of good Northamptonshire stock on the 9th August 1631, at the Vicarage of Aldwinkle, between Thrapston and Oundle; he was educated at Westminster School and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he remained from 1650 to 1657. Then he went to live in London. The verse he had written so far was of no great merit or promise, but with his *Heroic Stanzas* (1658) on the death of Cromwell, he set out definitely on a literary career.

At the Restoration Dryden supported the Royalists. Indeed for a young man with his way to make there was nothing else to do. With *Astræa Redux*, his poem greeting Charles on his return, Dryden first became known as 'the poet'. In 1663 he married Lady Elizabeth Howard, sister of his friend and patron Sir Robert Howard, and then he settled down to a career of eighteen years (1663-81) as a dramatist. Unsuccessful at first with *The Wild Gallant* (1663), he achieved among the twenty-two plays written in this period enough successes, both in comedy and in the rather stilted heroic tragedies then fashionable, to bring him prosperity and to establish him as the greatest living poet. The chief of these plays were *The Indian Emperor* (1665), *The Conquest of Granada* (1670), *Aureng-Zebe* (1676), and *The Spanish Friar* (1681). Though he did not produce the three plays a year stipulated for in his agreement with the King's theatre, the work left him little opportunity for anything else. Nevertheless he produced in 1667 the

long quatrain poem *Annus Mirabilis*, and in 1668 the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. This latter indeed was originally really part of his dramatic work, for it grew out of a rather acrimonious dispute with Sir Robert Howard on the comparative merits of the heroic couplet and blank verse in tragedy.

Dryden now forsook the drama altogether until after the Revolution of 1688. He had never felt himself peculiarly fitted for it, and he could now afford to please himself. So it was that he found his true subject-matter in political satire. *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) was a great and immediate success, and Dryden followed it the same year with other satires, *The Medal*, *Absalom and Achitophel (Second Part)*, and *Mac Flecknoe*. These are the works on which his reputation principally rests. Then come his two religious poems, *Religio Laici* (1682) and *The Hind and The Panther* (1687), and between them the most interesting as well as the most puzzling act of his life, his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1686. Was Dryden sincere, or was he looking for preferment from James II? On the one hand there is sufficient evidence in *Religio Laici* that he preferred infallible authority in matters of religion, though he had never shown much religious feeling before. On the other hand there was apparently not much to be gained.

As it turned out indeed, he lost heavily when the Revolution came in 1688. All the offices and pensions went which he had enjoyed under Charles and James, and which comprised the main part of his regular income. What made it worse was that the Laureateship, which he had held since 1670, went to his old enemy Shadwell, the object of his satire in *Mac Flecknoe*. But facing the ruin of his fortunes with courage, Dryden at once cast about for fresh work to maintain himself and to set his three sons out in the world. Naturally he thought first of the stage, and among the various plays he wrote from 1690 to 1692 he scored fresh successes with *Don Sebastian* (1690) and *Amphitryon* (1690). But the main work of this last period of his life was translation. Much of Ovid, Virgil, Theocritus, and Horace he had already translated, some of it ten years before. Now he translated the whole of Juvenal and Perisus, more of Ovid

and Homer, and lastly he undertook in 1693 and completed in 1697 a translation of the whole of Virgil into English verse. It sold out immediately, and though the profits were not so great as those from Pope's Homer twenty-five years later, they were at any rate considerable. His last works were the translation of fables from Ovid, Boccaccio, and Chaucer, published in November 1699, and the *Secular Masque*, intended to celebrate the opening of the new century. He died on the 1st May 1700, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

In 1664, thirty-six years before his death, Pepys had already spoken of him as 'the poet'; and the pre-eminence he enjoyed for so many years among the wits and poets of the town is finely suggested in the reference made by Pope to his one meeting with 'the glorious John' at Will's coffee-house, 'Virgilium tantum vidi'. Yet we know in reality very little about Dryden the man. He was fond of fishing, a few anecdotes are told about him, he changed his religion for some reason not thoroughly fathomed, and he laboured long years at his art with enthusiasm and success, facing poverty in his old age with resolution and resource.

WORK

GENERAL

Dryden's poetry is of a very different order from the poetry of the nineteenth century; it deals with a world of different and narrower dimensions, with the life of society in his day. After the passion of Shelley and the profundity of Wordsworth, he might seem almost unpoetical. He certainly has not the power to compress into surprising and illuminating phrases wide ranges of emotional experience, or the power to move us to wonder at the mystery in a grain of sand or a flower in the crannied wall. But his technical skill, unrivalled as it still is in its own particular direction, was made to serve purposes for which it was pre-eminently fitted, and

purposes which the most hostile of critics could hardly call unpoetical.

✓ His subject was the society about him. Though the Romantic poets succeed again and again in entering a universe more profound in meaning than ours, often in their descriptions of the life and men we know, they seem almost as awkward and naïve as country bumpkins. Here at any rate Dryden has the advantage. It may have been true, as he says himself, and it is confirmed by Congreve, that 'my conversation is slow, my humour reserved and saturnine', but the defect does not appear in his poetry. Turning a witty and cultured compliment to a lady, captivating the wits of the town in a prologue or an epilogue, or flattering, how easily, the more learned audience at Oxford, describing with a smile of amused contempt the politicians and the poetasters of the day, even when excogitating arguments, dullest of subjects for poetry, on Roman Catholicism and the Church of England, always he has the superb ease of a master not merely of versification but of the fitting tone of utterance too. He met society on its own level, he used 'the colloquial speech of the day, the speech in which men traffic and quarrel and discuss, but he used it with such intensity and conciseness that he raised it to a higher power'.

For work of this kind, which demanded applause immediately on publication, and could not wait till men had digested and 'appreciated' it, the journalist's flair was a real necessity. Dryden had it in no small degree. He could seize the opportune moment, and constant practice had given him such mastery of both verse and prose that haste never seemed to ruin his quality. As he says in *The Preface to the Fables*, 'thoughts come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to choose or reject, to run them into verse or to give them the other harmony of prose'. But indeed a command of harmony either in prose or verse is much more than a mere journalistic accomplishment.

It might be expected too that in work produced, as Dryden's was, for particular occasions, there would be too many proper names, topical allusions, and hits at the fashions to allow it to hold the admiration of readers for

more than a very short time. Dryden, however, suffers from this very little, if at all ; certainly he suffers much less than Pope, whose *Dunciad* requires a whole *Who's Who* of the day for its full understanding. Even then much of Pope's satire is meaningless to the general reader, for the names are too often merely names, abstractions, for whom, we gather, Pope had some personal and private grudge. But the men Dryden deals with are always men, persons we can recognize to-day in our own experience, and the hatred he expresses rises obviously from enthusiasm for what is noble and right, and not from personal malice.

The range and quality of his work are a continual surprise. That a man writing to catch the ear of society in order to support himself should confine himself to that which he can do best, and in it achieve a degree of mastery, is natural enough ; but that he should try so many directions, and in each of them appear as a master, is astonishing. In poetry he wrote satires, descriptive and didactic poems, epistles, prologues and epilogues, songs and odes, elegies and translations ; and here he is still acknowledged one of our great poets. In drama he wrote tragedies and comedies, heroic dramas and operas ; here indeed he was not without rivals in his own day, and although his fame as a dramatist has completely vanished now, he certainly achieved a high degree of competence in the particular type of play he tried to popularize. As critic, he discussed in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* and in the prefaces to his numerous publications practically all the points at issue among literary critics of his day, in such an authoritative way as to give a lead to the practice of almost the whole of the following century. Here indeed he excelled ; and not only as critic, but as the wielder of a prose style unequalled for ease and flexibility.

Few other writers have had a range as wide as his, or have achieved mastery in so many directions. What Dr. Johnson wrote for Oliver Goldsmith's epitaph in Westminster Abbey, 'There is no kind of writing he did not touch, and he touched nothing he did not embellish' receives a very illuminating sidelight from the comparison with Dryden, for whereas

Goldsmith only 'touched', Dryden practised assiduously for years.

This long training and practice were in fact particularly important. Though Dryden's own statement that 'The same parts and application which have made me a poet might have raised me to any honours of the gown' is not to be taken seriously as a disclaimer of any specifically poetic ambition or ability, it is quite clear that it was just the long training in verse-writing he had while working for the stage that gave him the mastery of verse seen in *Absalom and Achitophel*. Similarly in prose his last work, the *Preface to the Fables*, written when he was nearly 70 years of age, is in many respects his best. 'He was an improving writer to his last', said Congreve.

SATIRE

The particular occasion for *Absalom and Achitophel* was the arrest of the Earl of Shaftesbury in 1681 on a charge of high treason, 'for conspiring for the death of the King and the subversion of the Government'. Charles II had no legitimate children, and the heir to the throne was a Roman Catholic, James, Duke of York, brother of the king. The Whigs, led by the Earl of Shaftesbury, who nursed a bitter hatred against the Duke of York for causing him to lose the Lord Chancellorship, wanted to exclude the Duke of York from the throne in favour of the Duke of Monmouth, Charles's illegitimate son, who was a Protestant. With this end in view they introduced the Exclusion Bill. Popular excitement ran very high, especially after Titus Oates' allegations in 1678 of the existence of a Popish Plot against the King. There was even fear of civil war. The House of Lords, however, rejected the Bill in 1680, and the next Parliament was dissolved almost immediately. The excitement then led to a reaction in favour of the King, so that Charles found himself strong enough to imprison Shaftesbury in the Tower on a charge of high treason. A week before the trial, on the 17th November 1681, Dryden's poem appeared, ridiculing the members of Shaftesbury's party and prophesying

their downfall. As Sir Walter Scott wrote, 'The time of its appearance was chosen with as much art as the poem displays genius.'

The poem begins with a description of the state of the parties, passes on to a satirical portrait of Achitophel (Shaftesbury), who tempts Absalom (the Duke of Monmouth) to make an attempt on the throne. The party is formed, the leaders each described and ridiculed. First among them all is Zimri (the Duke of Buckingham), the description of whose character Dryden himself said was worth the whole poem, 'It is not bloody, but it is ridiculous enough'. Absalom then courts the popular favour. Next Dryden examines the theories then held of the relations between King and people, deciding that tradition is the safest guide, and that there must be no sudden innovations. Then come friendly portraits of the King's supporters. Their leaders show the King what dangers are arising, and he, 'by Heaven inspired', delivers his oracle in epic fashion, prophesying a dire fate for the rebels. The poem ends with peals of thunder and the Almighty's assenting nod. So 'the god-like David was restored'.

It will be seen that this, the greatest political satire in English, is in many ways not a satire at all. Dryden himself in the title called it 'A Poem', so distinguishing it from *The Medal*, which was written to attack Shaftesbury and the Whigs, and which he called 'A Satire against Seditious and Schismatical Begunings'. There are many elements in *Absalom and Achitophel* besides the satiric; there is the situation itself and the biblical allegory; the heroic setting and the dignified manner of such speeches as that beginning, 'Auspicious Prince at whose nativity', and of such descriptions as that beginning, 'Him staggering so when Hell's dire agent found', which is apparently an imitation of the Miltonic use of inversion; then there are the favourable character sketches of Absalom and the supporters of the King, and finally the arguments which Dryden produces in support of the Royalist party.

All these are of immense importance. The heroic background of epic manner and allegorical narrative lifts the poem quite clear of the pettiness of party strife; so an added sting is given to the ridicule in the character

drawings, and a greater sincerity in attack is gained by contrasting the objects of his hatred with the sanity of nobility and virtue. *Absalom and Achitophel* in fact is not a satire ; it is a little epic, containing also humorous and satiric elements. It is a unique kind of poetry. *Mac Flecknoe* illustrates another method of satire introduced by Dryden, the mock heroic, where Flecknoe, the Prince of Dullness, is shown appointing his successor, Shadwell. Here again Dryden takes his subject away from the pettiness to which satire can only too easily fall. In a political satire such as *Absalom and Achitophel*, there would have been for any other writer a danger of its becoming a mere party pamphlet, especially as it appeared at a time when party feeling was most bitterly aroused. But in Dryden's handling of the subject there was no such danger. When his imagination is fired by any situation, he shows the true poetic faculty ; he is unable to touch his subject at all without lifting it from the sordid levels of mere satire to the more imaginative realm of art.

The virulence of his satire is softened down in *Absalom and Achitophel* in accordance with his general purpose, and ridiculing banter is substituted. There is nothing for example to compare with the bitter, rhetorical invektive of the passage in *The Medal* beginning, 'But thou, the pander of the peoples' hearts'. Here he is attacking directly ; there is little sweetening leaven in the satire itself, though Dryden's love for his country and appreciation of its greatness do give a satisfying contrast to the villainy of such men as Shaftesbury. In *Absalom and Achitophel*, however, Dryden was even willing to praise at the same time as he satirized, and inserted a passage in the revised version of the poem praising Shaftesbury as a judge. 'I confess I have laid in for those (the more moderate readers) by rebating the satire, where justice would allow, from carrying too sharp an edge. . . . I have but laughed at some men's follies, when I could have declaimed against their vices ; and other men's virtues I have commanded as freely as I have taxed their crimes.'

The reasons for this kind of satire Dryden has fully explained in his *Discourse Concerning the Original and*

Progress of Satire : ' Yet still the nicest and most delicate touches of satire consist in fine raillery. . . . How easy is it to call rogue and villain, and that wittily ! But how hard to make a man appear a fool, a blockhead or a knave, without using any of these opprobrious terms ! . . . Neither is it true that this fineness of raillery is offensive. A witty man is tickled while he is hurt in this manner, and a fool feels it not. . . . I avoided the mention of great crimes, and applied myself to the representing of blind sides and little extravagancies.'

Absalom and Achitophel and *Mac Flecknoe* show all this to perfection. *The Medal* is different ; it has none of the contemptuously laughing portraiture of the other two satires and it is much more serious in idea, dealing as it does with the ways of the crowd in republics, and with the impiety of rebellion against tradition. But the other two poems have railing portraits supreme in our literature. Achitophel, ' for close designs and crooked counsels fit ' ; Zimri, who in ' the course of one revolving moon, Was chymist, fiddler statesman and buffoon ' ; Shimei, of whom he says, ' Cool was his kitchen though his brains were hot ' ; Doeg, who ' made still a blundering kind of melody ' ; Shadwell, who ' never deviates into sense ' :—all of these portraits delight us at once with their shrewdness of wit, their bounding humour, and their truth to human nature.

Achitophel, it is said, is at once Shaftesbury and the scheming politician of every age ; Zimri is the Duke of Buckingham and the reckless profligate who has never the same opinions and ways for two minutes together. The characters, that is to say, represent both individuals and types. The details of the life of Buckingham are there, and exaggeration is only used to make the character appear more wonderfully ridiculous than he really was. The contrast with other satirists, who make their enemies appear meaner and more disgusting, again emphasizes Dryden's power. But the details of the life are generalized, given without any local or temporary references that might cause difficulty to the reader. Thus at one and the same time the character appears as one true to human nature in every age, and represents also a particular person at a particular period.

The two hundred lines which Dryden contributed to the *Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel* contain the immortal portraits of Doeg (Settle) and Og (Shadwell); and *Mac Flecknoe*, though it says little enough about Flecknoe himself, who, it is hard to say why, was the stock subject for satire, has some of the best lines of all in the portrait of Shadwell.

Character-writing in prose was at that time an old and established form. Ever since Ben Jonson had given examples of 'humours' it had found a long list of practitioners, chief of whom was Clarendon. Shaftesbury himself has one character sketch in his Autobiography which is as clear and full of detail as any of them. Dryden's characters in fact cannot be compared with many of these for mere richness and clearness of detail. Nor was he alone in writing characters in verse, but he wrote in verse of a quality which no one else in the seventeenth century could equal, and hardly anyone has equalled since. As a result his characters stand alone in sheer technical perfection as well as imagination, in humour, and in satiric wit.

OTHER POETRY

Dryden's power of arguing in verse has already been mentioned in connexion with *Absalom and Achitophel*. *Religio Laici* shows it much more clearly. It is not that he was an intellectual, deeply interested in ideas in themselves, in recognizing and criticizing them; nor was he a profound thinker; but he delighted in manipulating arguments, in ratiocination. In *Religio Laici* he is seeking the form of Christianity most suitable to his Tory principles. The poem amounts to a defence of Anglicanism. Deism will not do; his religion must be supernatural and revealed. For authority he relies on the Scriptures. Many of his remarks here on the need for an infallible authority are more consonant with Roman Catholicism than with Anglicanism, and indeed point to his later conversion. But the cogency with which he marshals his arguments, and the ease with which he passes from one to another in the building of

the form of his poem are of more interest than the ideas themselves or than any expression of his faith the poem may contain. For his religion might be purely political, without feeling of any sort, if this work were to be taken as final evidence, were it not for the very moving opening passage, the most beautiful lines of the whole poem, and indeed among the most beautiful he ever wrote.

The other poems in heroic couplets in these selections are mainly prologues, epilogues, and epistles. It was here that he gained his skill in the form, that he learned how to flatter, criticize, and satirize, how, in fact, to throw all his ideas into heroic verse in such a way as at once to gain the ear of his audience. Before the publication of *Absalom and Achitophel* he had written sixty-five prologues and epilogues alone. In the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* he has laid down the ideals that he and other writers held in regard to the technique of verse. 'The sweetness of English verse was never understood or practised by our fathers', he says; Waller and Denham first reformed English numbers, and 'taught us to mould our thoughts into easy and significant words, to retrench the superfluities of expression and to make our rhyme so properly a part of the verse, that it should never mislead the sense but itself be led and governed by it'.

However surprising this judgment of the importance of Waller and Denham may be, in view of his acquaintance with the great Elizabethan poets, it remained the accepted notion until well on towards the end of the eighteenth century; and as for the ideal of technical skill he describes, the increase in ease of his poetry shows how seriously he worked towards it. Gradually he acquired mastery of the figures of speech, of the cæsura, of *enjambement*, of rhyme, and of the effective use of double rhyme for purposes of ridicule; of triplets, three lines rhyming together instead of two, to slow the reader down and make him give extra attention to that particular passage; of the occasional use of the Alexandrine and even of a line of fourteen syllables, for a like effect; and finally, of diction suited to his subject, as, for example, his use of proverb and biblical phrase in *Absalom and Achitophel*.

There is nothing in the history of the heroic couplet

quite like Dryden's use of it. Pope's glitter at length becomes monotonous; he can be imitated, Dryden cannot. All through the eighteenth century he was the standard of verse-writing, and even in the nineteenth century poet after poet, from Keats to Francis Thompson, went to Dryden to learn his art. Thus, like so different a poet as Spenser, he might even be called 'a poet's poet'.

His mastery of verse technique, though acquired in the school of the heroic couplet, is as evident in lyric forms as it is there. The sentiments may be shoddy in many of the lyrics, but the music is always beautiful. In the *Ode to St. Cecilia's Day* he has seized the idea of illustrating the sense by the sound; first the harp, then the trumpets, drums, flutes, violins, the organ, and finally the grand chorus are all imitated in exquisite word-music. In the immortal *Alexander's Feast* he applies the same power with supreme effect to a story. It is, of course, an unreal mock majesty that

Assumes the god,
Affects the nod,
And seems to shake the spheres.

✓ but there is no denying the deftness of touch that produced such music. These with the *Ode to Mrs. Anne Killigrew* are Dryden's achievements in the Pindaric form. Cowley had begun the fashion of writing Pindaric odes with a failure to understand Pindar's form. He thought there was no law or order at all in Pindar's odes, and in consequence his own ode, *Praise of Pindar*, is a piece of as execrable writing as it is possible to find in the history of the lyric. Dryden saw what was wrong, analysed the trouble, and gave examples of the way in which odes in English could best parallel the Greek.

'In imitating Pindar our numbers should for the most part be lyrical; . . . the ear must preside, and direct the judgment to the choice of numbers: . . . without the nicety of this, the harmony of Pindaric verse can never be complete; the cadency of one line must be a rule to that of the next; and the sound of the former must slide gently into that which follows, without leaping

from one extreme to another. It must be done like the shadowings of a picture, which fall by degrees into a darker colour.'

Dryden showed his lyric gift of music also in the lighter songs scattered through the plays. The seventeenth century was an age of song. One of the most attractive traits revealed by Pepys in his diary is his fondness for music. He is practising, he is writing songs, he is scheming to get rid of his music-master because he has learnt all the teacher has to show. Similarly every one in his circle is studying, practising, and writing music. Dryden could produce songs in any metre, anapæstic, dactylic, iambic, and occasionally too songs expressing real feeling. Many of them unfortunately do not admit of quotation, but they are so exquisite that Dryden was long held, even by so great a writer as Sir Walter Scott, greater as a lyrist than in any other direction.

CRITICISM

The Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1665) is Dryden's most important contribution to literary criticism. It discusses three main topics, the relative merits of the ancients and moderns in drama, the relative merits of French and English drama, and the suitability of the heroic couplet for tragedy. In the first of these topics, Dryden anticipates by twenty years a discussion which, beginning in Paris, was to engage the attention of all the important critics both in England and on the Continent. This was the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, the most noteworthy contribution to which in England was Swift's *Battle of the Books*.

The second topic again was of first-rate importance, because of the enormous influence of the dramatic theory and practice of Corneille on English dramatists, and particularly on Dryden himself. Moreover, the discussion in Dryden's hands is not merely a comparison of plays but also a comparison of theories and types of drama, an attempt to justify the romantic drama of the Elizabethans in face of the adherence of the French to the rigid rules of neo-classical drama. This was an

attempt that had never been made before. The usual neo-classical method was simply to condemn Shakespeare straight away for his failure to observe the rules.

3. The third topic was of more local and temporary interest. In the *Preface to the Rival Ladies* (1664) Dryden had defended the use of rhyme in drama. The following year his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard, replied to this in the *Preface to Four New Plays*, saying that rhyme was unnatural in drama. Dryden puts the arguments of this preface into the mouth of Crites, who represents Sir Robert Howard, and answers them himself, fairly effectively. But the discussion did not end there. Sir Robert Howard replied in another preface in 1668, and Dryden could not refrain from replying in his turn in 1685. (All this time he was attempting to popularize the rhymed heroic play,) and though his arguments in the essay are sound, further practice in the writing of rhymed plays eventually made him change his mind. (Passion, he said, 'was too fierce to be in fetters bound', so he returned finally to blank verse.)

4. In all these discussions Dryden leaves the decision open to the reader. His aim is not to instruct writers in their art, as was the aim of Sidney and the other Elizabethan critics. (Moreover, though it is obvious that he is inclined to accept the unities, the decorum of the stage, and the other arbitrary rules of French drama, he actually accepts none of them, but submits them all to his judgment, analyses them theoretically, and refers them to the practice of dramatists in ancient times, in France, and in England.)

5. He is theoretic and comparative then, but he realizes also that times and customs change, that what was suitable in Greece or Rome need not necessarily be a rule to the Restoration stage. Comparative and historical criticism come into their own with Dryden. There is historical criticism of a kind in the Elizabethans, in their demand for freedom in prosody and their desire to follow the national tradition in the matter of rhyme. But the historical attitude was then only occasional, and the critics themselves were hardly conscious of the real nature of their argument. (In Dryden the historical method is deliberate and habitual.)

But the glory of Dryden's criticism is not chiefly or only this. It is that as soon as he comes face to face with a great writer he forgets his theories and the rules that writers were bandying about in Restoration London and gives himself up to enthusiastic eulogy. The passage on Shakespeare in this essay, and those on Fletcher and Jonson, have been noticed by every critic since his day as the finest passages of his criticism. That on Shakespeare was the foundation of all Shakespearian criticism for the next half-century; all that editors could do was to expand and exemplify the phrases of the 'glorious John'. None of those rules which in Dryden's time were just beginning to get their stranglehold on English literature was observed by Shakespeare. His plays belong to a different world. Dryden alone dared to enter this world without complete baggage of unities and decorum, and to say what he found there. When the pedant came along later with his set of rules, he found Othello to be 'a bloody farce, without salt or savour'.

'Dryden', said Dr. Johnson, 'may be properly considered as the father of English criticism.' His 'criticism is the criticism of a poet; not a dull collection of theorems, nor a rude detection of faults . . . but a gay and vigorous dissertation, where delight is mingled with instruction, and where the author proves his right of judgment by his power of performance.'

Much of the gayness and vigour to which Dr. Johnson alludes are traceable to Dryden's prose style. Before his time there was no easy prose style suitable for any and every purpose, from the familiar tone of the essay to the more learned tone of scholarly disputation. There was no choice between the over-involved, parenthetical style and the opposite extreme of too great colloquialism tending to vulgarity. Dryden says little about it. He found he needed a style which he could use for prefaces, for complimentary letters, for criticism, and by constant practice he evolved one. In Dryden's prose we hear for the first time the note of prose of to-day. (He has few mannerisms) He still uses the long, involved sentence occasionally, when he finds it convenient; he does not balance clauses for rhythmical effect, he is content to be easy, familiar without being colloquial, and above all

perspicuous. 'It has often been noticed, that poets,
when they have any faculty for prose-writing, are among
✓ the best of prose writers, and of no one is this more true
than it is of Dryden.' *→ poet is a prose writer*

SELECTIONS FROM DRYDEN

ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

A POEM

IN pious times ere priestcraft did begin,
Before polygamy was made a sin ;
When man on many multiplied his kind,
Ere one to one was cursedly confined, . . .
Then Israel's monarch after Heaven's own heart
His vigorous warmth did variously impart
To wives and slaves ; and, wide as his command,
Scatter'd his Maker's image through the land. 10
Michal, of royal blood, the crown did wear,
A soil ungrateful to the tiller's care :
Not so the rest ; for several mothers bore
To god-like David several sons before.
But since like slaves his bed they did ascend,
No true succession could their seed attend.
Of all this numerous progeny was none
So beautiful, so brave, as Absalon. 20
For that his conscious destiny made way,
By manly beauty, to imperial sway.
Abs. Early, in foreign fields, he won renown.
With kings and states allied to Israel's crown ;
In peace the thoughts of war he could remove,
And seem'd as he were only born for love.
Whate'er he did, was done with so much ease,
In him alone 'twas natural to please ;

His motions all accompanied with grace ;
And paradise was open'd in his face. 30
With secret joy indulgent David view'd
His youthful image in his son renew'd ;
To all his wishes nothing he denied,
And made the charming Annabel his bride.
What faults he had, (for who from faults is free ?)
His father could not, or he would not see.
Some warm excesses, which the law forbore,
Were construed youth that purged by boiling o'er ;
And Amnon's murder, by a specious name,
Was call'd a just revenge for injured fame. 40
Thus praised and loved, the noble youth remained,
While David, undisturbed, in Sion reigned.
But life can never be sincerely blest ;
Heaven punishes the bad, and proves the best.
The Jews, a headstrong, moody, murmuring race,
As ever tried the extent and stretch of grace ;
God's pamper'd people, whom, debauch'd with ease,
No king could govern, nor no God could please ;
(Gods they had tried of every shape and size,
That god-smiths could produce, or priests devise ;) 50
These Adam-wits, too fortunately free,
Began to dream they wanted liberty ;
And when no rule, no precedent was found,
Of men by laws less circumscribed and bound ;
They led their wild desires to woods and caves,
And thought that all but savages were slaves.
They who, when Saul was dead, without a blow,
Made foolish Ishbosheth the crown forego ;
Who banish'd David did from Hebron bring,
And with a general shout proclaim'd him king ; 60
Those very Jews, who, at their very best,
Their humour more than loyalty express'd,
Now wonder'd why so long they had obey'd
An idol monarch, which their hands had made ;
Thought they might ruin him they could create,
Or melt him to that golden calf, a state.

But these were random bolts ; no form'd design,
Nor interest made the factious crowd to join :
The sober part of Israel, free from stain,
Well knew the value of a peaceful reign ;
And looking backward with a wise affright,
Saw seams of wounds dishonest to the sight,
In contemplation of whose ugly scars,
They cursed the memory of civil wars.
The moderate sort of men, thus qualified,
Inclined the balance to the better side ;
And David's mildness managed it so well,
The bad found no occasion to rebel.
But when to sin our bias'd nature leans,
The careful devil is still at hand with means ;
And providently pimps for ill desires :
The good old cause, revived, a plot requires.
Plots, true or false, are necessary things,
To raise up commonwealths, and ruin kings.

70

80

The inhabitants of old Jerusalem
Were Jebusites ; the town so call'd from them,
And theirs the native right.
But when the chosen people grew more strong,
The rightful cause at length became the wrong ;
And every loss the men of Jebus bore,
They still were thought God's enemies the more.
Thus worn or weaken'd, well or ill content,
Submit they must to David's government :
Impoverish'd and deprived of all command,
Their taxes doubled as they lost their land ;
And, what was harder yet to flesh and blood,
Their gods disgraced, and burnt like common wood.
This set the heathen priesthood in a flame,
For priests of all religions are the same.
Of whatsoe'er descent their godhead be,
Stock, stone, or other homely pedigree,
In his defence his servants are as bold,
As if he had been born of beaten gold.

90

100

The Jewish rabbins, though their enemies,
In this conclude them honest men and wise :
For 'twas their duty, all the learned think,
To espouse his cause, by whom they eat and drink.
From hence began that plot, the nation's curse,
Bad in itself, but represented worse,
Raised in extremes, and in extremes decried, 110
With oaths affirm'd, with dying vows denied,
Not weigh'd nor winnow'd by the multitude ;
But swallowed in the mass, unchew'd and crude.
Some truth there was, but dash'd and brew'd with lies,
To please the fools, and puzzle all the wise :
Succeeding times did equal folly call,
Believing nothing, or believing all.
The Egyptian rites the Jebusites embraced,
Where gods were recommended by their taste.
Such savoury deities must needs be good, 120
As served at once for worship and for food,
By force they could not introduce these gods,
For ten to one in former days was odds.
So fraud was used, the sacrificer's trade ;
Fools are more hard to conquer than persuade.
Their busy teachers mingled with the Jews,
And raked for converts even the court and stews ;
Which Hebrew priests the more unkindly took,
Because the fleece accompanies the flock.
Some thought they God's anointed meant to slay 130
By guns, invented since full many a day :
Our author swears it not ; but who can know
How far the devil and Jebusites may go ?
This plot, which fail'd for want of common sense,
Had yet a deep and dangerous consequence ;
For as when raging fevers boil the blood,
The standing lake soon floats into a flood
And every hostile humour, which before
Slept quiet in its channels, bubbles o'er ;
So several factions from this first ferment, 140
Work up to foam, and threat the government.

Some by their friends, more by themselves thought
wise,

Opposed the power to which they could not rise.

Some had in courts been great, and thrown from
thence,

Like fiends were harden'd in impenitence.

Some, by their monarch's fatal mercy, grown

From pardon'd rebels kinsmen to the throne,

Were raised in power and public office high ;

Strong bands, if bands ungrateful men could tie.

Of these the false Achitophel was first,

150

A name to all succeeding ages cursed :

For close designs, and crooked counsels fit,

Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,

Restless, unfix'd in principles and place,

In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace :

A fiery soul, which, working out its way,

Fretted the pigmy-body to decay,

And o'er-inform'd the tenement of clay.

A daring pilot in extremity ;

Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high,

He sought the storms ; but, for a calm unfit,

161

Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.

Great wits are sure to madness near allied

And thin partitions do their bounds divide ;

Else why should he, with wealth and honour blest,

Refuse his age the needful hours of rest ?

Punish a body which he could not please,

Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease ?

And all to leave what with his toil he won,

To that unfeather'd two-legg'd thing, a son,

170

Got, while his soul did huddled notions try,

And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy.

In friendship false, implacable in hate,

Resolved to ruin or to rule the state ;

To compass this the triple bond he broke,

The pillars of the public safety shook,

And fitted Israel for a foreign yoke ;

Then seized with fear, yet still affecting fame,
Usurp'd a patriot's all-atoning name.
So easy still it proves, in factious times, 180
With public zeal to cancel private crimes.
How safe is treason, and how sacred ill,
Where none can sin against the people's will,
Where crowds can wink, and no offence be known,
Since in another's guilt they find their own !
Yet fame deserved no enemy can grudge ;
The statesman we abhor, but praise the judge.
In Israel's courts ne'er sat an Abbethdin
With more discerning eyes, or hands more clean,
Unbribed, unsought, the wretched to redress, 190
Swift of dispatch, and easy of access.
Oh ! had he been content to serve the crown,
With virtues only proper to the gown,
Or had the rankness of the soil been freed
From cockle, that oppress'd the noble seed,
David for him his tuneful harp had strung,
And heaven had wanted one immortal song.
But wild Ambition loves to slide, not stand,
And Fortune's ice prefers to Virtue's land.
Achitophel, grown weary to possess 200
A lawful fame, and lazy happiness,
Disdain'd the golden fruit to gather free,
And lent the crowd his arm to shake the tree.
Now, manifest of crimes contrived long since,
He stood at bold defiance with his prince,
Held up the buckler of the people's cause
Against the crown, and skulk'd behind the laws.
The wish'd occasion of the plot he takes ;
Some circumstances finds, but more he makes ;
By buzzing emissaries fills the ears 210
Of listening crowds with jealousies and fears
Of arbitrary counsels brought to light,
And proves the king himself a Jebusite.
Weak arguments ! which yet he knew full well,
Were strong with people easy to rebel.

For, govern'd by the moon, the giddy Jews
Tread the same track when she the prime renews ;
And once in twenty years, their scribes record,
By natural instinct they change their lord.
Achitophel still wants a chief, and none 220
Was found so fit as warlike Absalon,
Not that he wish'd his greatness to create,
For politicians neither love nor hate :
But, for he knew his title not allow'd
Would keep him still depending on the crowd,
That kingly power, thus ebbing out, might be
Drawn to the dregs of a democracy.
Him he attempts with studied arts to please,
And sheds his venom in such words as these //

‘ Auspicious prince, at whose nativity 230
Some royal planet ruled the southern sky,
Thy longing country's darling and desire,
Their cloudy pillar and their guardian fire,
Their second Moses, whose extended wand
Divides the seas, and shows the promised land,
Whose dawning day, in every distant age,
Has exercised the sacred prophet's rage,
The people's prayer, the glad diviner's theme,
The young men's vision, and the old men's dream !
Thee, Saviour, thee the nation's vows confess, 240
And, never satisfied with seeing, bless :
Swift unbespoken pomps thy steps proclaim,
And stammering babes are taught to lisp thy
name.

How long wilt thou the general joy detain,
Starve and defraud the people of thy reign !
Content ingloriously to pass thy days,
Like one of virtue's fools that feeds on praise ;
Till thy fresh glories, which now shine so bright,
Grow stale, and tarnish with our daily sight.
Believe me, royal youth, thy fruit must be 250
Or gather'd ripe, or rot upon the tree.

Heaven has to all allotted, soon or late,
 Some lucky revolution of their fate :
 Whose motions if we watch and guide with skill,
 (For human good depends on human will,)
 Our fortune rolls as from a smooth descent,
 And from the first impression takes the bent :
 But, if unseized, she glides away like wind,
 And leaves repenting folly far behind.
 Now, now she meets you with a glorious prize, 260
 And spreads her locks before her as she flies.
 Had thus old David, from whose loins you spring,
 Not dared, when fortune call'd him to be king,
 At Gath an exile he might still remain,
 And Heaven's anointing oil had been in vain.
 Let his successful youth your hopes engage,
 But shun the example of declining age.
 Behold him setting in his western skies,
 The shadows lengthening as the vapours rise ; 269
 He is not now, as when on Jordan's sand
 The joyful people throng'd to see him land,
 Covering the beach, and blackening all the strand, }
 But, like the prince of angels, from his height
 Comes tumbling downward with diminish'd light :
 Betray'd by one poor plot to public scorn,
 (Our only blessing since his cursed return),
 Those heaps of people which one sheaf did bind,
 Blown off and scatter'd by a puff of wind.
 What strength can he to your designs oppose,
 Naked of friends and round beset with foes ? 280
 If Pharaoh's doubtful succour he should use,
 A foreign aid would more incense the Jews ;
 Proud Egypt would dissembled friendship bring,
 Foment the war, but not support the king :
 Nor would the royal party e'er unite
 With Pharaoh's arms to assist the Jebusite ;
 Or if they should, their interest soon would
 break,
 And with such odious aid make David weak.

All sorts of men by my successful arts,
Abhorring kings, estrange their alter'd hearts 290
From David's rule : and 'tis their general cry,
Religion, commonwealth, and liberty.
If you, as champion of the public good,
Add to their arms a chief of royal blood,
What may not Israel hope, and what applause
Might such a general gain by such a cause ?
Not barren praise alone, that gaudy flower,
Fair only to the sight, but solid power ;
And nobler is a limited command,
Given by the love of all your native land, 300
Than a successive title, long and dark,
Drawn from the mouldy rolls of Noah's ark.'

What cannot praise effect in mighty minds,
When flattery soothes, and when ambition blinds ?
Desire of power, on earth a vicious weed,
Yet sprung from high is of celestial seed ;
In God 'tis glory ; and when men aspire,
'Tis but a spark too much of heavenly fire.
The ambitious youth too covetous of fame,
Too full of angels' mettle in his frame, 310
Unwarily was led from virtue's ways,
Made drunk with honour, and debauch'd with
praise.

Half loth, and half consenting to the ill,
For royal blood within him struggled still,
He thus replied :—' And what pretence have I
To take up arms for public liberty ?
My father governs with unquestion'd right,
The faith's defender, and mankind's delight,
Good, gracious, just, observant of the laws ;
And Heaven by wonders has espoused his cause. 320
Whom has he wrong'd in all his peaceful reign ?
Who sues for justice to his throne in vain ?
What millions has he pardon'd of his foes,
Whom just revenge did to his wrath expose ?

Mild, easy, humble, studious of our good,
Inclined to mercy, and averse from blood.
If mildness ill with stubborn Israel suit,
His crime is God's beloved attribute.
What could he gain his people to betray,
Or change his right for arbitrary sway ? 330
Let haughty Pharaoh curse with such a reign
His fruitful Nile, and yoke a servile train.
If David's rule Jerusalem displease,
The dog-star heats their brains to this disease.
Why then should I, encouraging the bad,
Turn rebel and run popularly mad ?
Were he a tyrant, who, by lawless might,
Oppress'd the Jews and raised the Jebusite,
Well might I mourn ; but nature's holy bands
Would curb my spirit and restrain my hands ; 340
The people might assert their liberty,
But what was right in them were crime in me.
His favour leaves me nothing to require,
Prevents my wishes, and out-runs desire ;
What more can I expect while David lives ?
All but his kingly diadem he gives :
And that '—But there he paused, then sighing, said—
' Is justly destined for a worthier head ;
For when my father from his toils shall rest,
And late augment the number of the blest, 350
His lawful issue shall the throne ascend,
Or the collateral line, where that shall end.
His brother, though oppress'd with vulgar spite,
Yet dauntless, and secure of native right,
Of every royal virtue stands possess'd,
Still dear to all the bravest and the best :
His courage foes, his friends his truth proclaim,
His loyalty the king, the world his fame.
His mercy e'en the offending crowd will find,
For sure he comes of a forgiving kind. 360
Why should I then repine at Heaven's decree
Which gives me no pretence to royalty ?

Yet, oh that fate, propitiously inclined,
Had raised my birth, or had debased my mind,
To my large soul not all her treasure lent,
And then betray'd it to a mean descent !
I find, I find my mounting spirits bold,
And David's part disdains my mother's mould.
Why am I scanted by a niggard birth ?
My soul disclaims the kindred of her earth ; 370
And, made for empire, whispers me within,
Desire of greatness is a god-like sin.'

Him staggering so when hell's dire agent found,
While fainting virtue scarce maintain'd her ground,
He pours fresh forces in, and thus replies :

' The eternal God, supremely good and wise,
Imparts not these prodigious gifts in vain.
What wonders are reserved to bless your reign !
Against your will, your arguments have shown,
Such virtue's only given to guide a throne. 380
Not that your father's mildness I contemn ;
But manly force becomes the diadem.
'Tis true he grants the people all they crave,
And more, perhaps, than subjects ought to have :
For lavish grants suppose a monarch tame,
And more his goodness than his wit proclaim.
But when should people strive their bonds to
break,

If not when kings are negligent or weak ?
Let him give on till he can give no more,
The thrifty Sanhedrin shall keep him poor ; 390
And every shekel which he can receive
Shall cost a limb of his prerogative.
To ply him with new plots shall be my care,
Or plunge him deep in some expensive war ;
Which when his treasure can no more supply,
He must, with the remains of kingship, buy.
His faithful friends our jealousies and fears
Call Jebusites, and Pharaoh's pensioners,

Whom when our fury from his aid has torn,
He shall be naked left to public scorn, 400
The next successor, whom I fear and hate,
My arts have made obnoxious to the state,
Turn'd all his virtues to his overthrow,
And gained our elders to pronounce a foe.
His right, for sums of necessary gold,
Shall first be pawn'd, and afterwards be sold ;
Till time shall ever-wanting David draw,
To pass your doubtful title into law.
If not, the people have a right supreme
To make their kings, for kings are made for them. 410
All empire is no more than power in trust,
Which, when resumed, can be no longer just.
Succession, for the general good design'd,
In its own wrong a nation cannot bind :
If altering that the people can relieve,
Better one suffer than a million grieve.
The Jews well know their power : ere Saul they chose,
God was their king, and God they durst depose.
Urge now your piety, your filial name,
A father's right, and fear of future fame ; 420
The public good, that universal call,
To which even Heaven submitted, answers all.
Nor let his love enchant your generous mind ;
'Tis nature's trick to propagate her kind.
Our fond begetters, who would never die,
Love but themselves in their posterity.
Or let his kindness by the effects be tried,
Or let him lay his vain pretence aside.
God said, he loved your father ; could he bring
A better proof, than to anoint him king ? 430
It surely show'd he loved the shepherd well,
Who gave so fair a flock as Israel.
Would David have you thought his darling son ?
What means he then to alienate the crown ?
The name of godly he may blush to bear ;
'Tis after God's own heart to cheat his heir.

He to his brother gives supreme command,
To you a legacy of barren land ;
Perhaps the old harp, on which he thrums his lays,
Or some dull Hebrew ballad in your praise. 440
Then the next heir, a prince severe and wise,
Already looks on you with jealous eyes ;
Sees through the thin disguises of your arts,
And marks your progress in the people's hearts ;
Though now his mighty soul its grief contains,
He meditates revenge who least complains ;
And like a lion, slumbering in the way,
Or sleep dissembling, while he waits his prey,
His fearless foes within his distance draws,
Constrains his roaring, and contracts his paws, 450
Till, at the last, his time for fury found,
He shoots with sudden vengeance from the ground,
The prostrate vulgar passes o'er and spares,
But with a lordly rage his hunters tears ;
Your case no tame expedients will afford,
Resolve on death, or conquest by the sword,
Which for no less a stake, than life you draw,
And self-defence is nature's eldest law.
Leave the warm people no considering time,
For then rebellion may be thought a crime. 460
Prevail yourself of what occasion gives,
But try your title while your father lives ;
And, that your arms may have a fair pretence,
Proclaim you take them in the king's defence ;
Whose sacred life each minute would expose
To plots, from seeming friends, and secret foes.
And who can sound the depth of David's soul ?
Perhaps his fear his kindness may control :
He fears his brother, though he loves his son,
For plighted vows too late to be undone. . . . 470
Doubt not : but, when he most affects the frown,
Commit a pleasing rape upon the crown.
Secure his person to secure your cause :
They who possess the prince possess the laws.'

He said, and this advice above the rest,
With Absalom's mild nature suited best ;
Unblamed for life, ambition set aside,
Not stain'd with cruelty, nor puff'd with pride, 480
How happy had he been, if destiny
Had higher placed his birth, or not so high !
His kingly virtues might have claim'd a throne,
And bless'd all other countries but his own ;
But charming greatness since so few refuse,
'Tis juster to lament him than accuse.
Strong were his hopes a rival to remove,
With blandishments to gain the public love,
To head the faction while their zeal was hot,
And popularly prosecute the plot. 490
To further this, Achitophel unites
The malcontents of all the Israelites,
Whose differing parties he could wisely join,
For several ends, to serve the same design ;
The best, (and of the princes some were such,)
Who thought the power of monarchy too much ;
Mistaken men, and patriots in their hearts,
Not wicked, but seduced by impious arts ;
By these the springs of property were bent,
And wound so high, they crack'd the government. 500
The next for interest sought to embroil the state,
To sell their duty at a dearer rate,
And make their Jewish markets of the throne ;
Pretending public good to serve their own.
Others thought kings an useless heavy load,
Who cost too much, and did too little good.
These were for laying honest David by,
On principles of pure good husbandry.
With them join'd all the haranguers of the throng
That thought to get preferment by the tongue. 510
Who follow next a double danger bring,
Not only hating David, but the king ;
The Solymæan rout, well versed of old,
In godly faction, and in treason bold,

Cowering and quaking at a conqueror's sword,
But lofty to a lawful prince restored,
Saw with disdain an Ethnic plot begun,
And scorn'd by Jebusites to be outdone.
Hot Levites headed these ; who pull'd before
From the ark, which in the Judges' days they bore, 520
Resumed their cant, and with a zealous cry,
Pursued their old beloved theocracy,
Where Sanhedrin and priest enslaved the nation,
And justified their spoils by inspiration ;
For who so fit to reign as Aaron's race,
If once dominion they could found in grace ?
These led the pack ; though not of surest scent,
Yet deepest mouth'd against the government.
A numerous host of dreaming saints succeed,
Of the true old enthusiastic breed : 530
'Gainst form and order they their power employ,
Nothing to build, and all things to destroy.
But far more numerous was the herd of such,
Who think too little, and who talk too much.
These out of mere instinct, they knew not why,
Adored their fathers' God and property,
And by the same blind benefit of fate,
The devil and the Jebusite did hate :
Born to be saved, even in their own despite,
Because they could not help believing right. 540
Such were the tools ; but a whole Hydra more
Remains of sprouting heads too long to score.
Some of their chiefs were princes of the land ;
In the first rank of these did Zimri stand ;
A man so various, that he seem'd to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome :
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was every thing by starts, and nothing long ;
But, in the course of one revolving moon,
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon ; 550
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.

Blest madman, who could every hour employ,
With something new to wish, or to enjoy !
Railing and praising were his usual themes,
And both, to show his judgment, in extremes :
So over-violent, or over-civil,
That every man with him was God or Devil.
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art ;
Nothing went unrewarded but desert. 560
Beggar'd by fools, whom still he found too late,
He had his jest, and they had his estate.
He laugh'd himself from court ; then sought relief
By forming parties, but could ne'er be chief :
For, spite of him, the weight of business fell
On Absalom, and wise Achitophel :
Thus, wicked but in will, of means bereft,
He left no faction, but of that was left.
Titles and names 'twere tedious to rehearse
Of lords, below the dignity of verse, 570
Wits, warriors, commonwealth's-men, were the best,
Kind husbands, and mere nobles, all the rest.
And therefore, in the name of dulness, be
The well-hung Balaam and cold Caleb, free ;
And canting Nadab let oblivion damn,
Who made new porridge for the paschal lamb.
Let friendship's holy band some names assure,
Some their own worth, and some let scorn secure.
Nor shall the rascal rabble here have place,
Whom kings no titles gave, and God no grace : 580
Not bull-faced Jonas, who could statutes draw
To mean rebellion, and make treason law.
But he, though bad, is follow'd by a worse,
The wretch who Heaven's anointed dared to curse ;
Shimei, whose youth did early promise bring
Of zeal to God and hatred to his king,
Did wisely from expensive sins refrain,
And never broke the sabbath but for gain :
Nor ever was he known an oath to vent,
Or curse, unless against the government. 590

Thus heaping wealth, by the most ready way
 Among the Jews which was to cheat and pray :
 The city, to reward his pious hate
 Against his master, chose him magistrate.
 His hand a vane of justice did uphold,
 His neck was loaded with a chain of gold.
 During his office, treason was no crime,
 The sons of Belial had a glorious time :
 For Shimei, though not prodigal of pelf,
 Yet loved his wicked neighbour as himself. 600
 When two or three were gather'd to declaim
 Against the monarch of Jerusalem,
 Shimei was always in the midst of them,
 And if they cursed the king when he was by,
 Would rather curse than break good company.
 If any durst his factious friends accuse,
 He pack'd a jury of dissenting Jews ;
 Whose fellow-feeling in the godly cause
 Would free the suffering saint from human
 laws.

For laws are only made to punish those 610
 Who serve the king, and to protect his foes.
 If any leisure time he had from power,
 (Because 'tis sin to misemploy an hour ;)
 His business was, by writing to persuade,
 That kings were useless, and a clog to trade ;
 And, that his noble style he might refine,
 No Rechabite more shunn'd the fumes of wine.
 Chaste were his cellars, and his shrieval board
 The grossness of a city feast abhorr'd :
 His cooks with long disuse their trade forgot ; 620
 Cool was his kitchen, though his brains were hot.
 Such frugal virtue, malice may accuse,
 But sure 'twas necessary to the Jews :
 For towns, once burnt, such magistrates require
 As dare not tempt God's providence by fire.
 With spiritual food he fed his servants well,
 But free from flesh that made the Jews rebel :

And Moses' laws he held in more account,
For forty days of fasting in the mount.
To speak the rest who better are forgot, 630
Would tire a well-breathed witness of the plot.
Yet, Corah, thou shalt from oblivion pass ;
Erect thyself, thou monumental brass,
High as the serpent of thy metal made,
While nations stand secure beneath thy shade.
What, though his birth were base, yet comets rise
From earthly vapours, ere they shine in skies.
Prodigious actions may as well be done
By weaver's issue, as by prince's son.
This arch-attestor for the public good, 640
By that one deed ennobles all his blood.
Who ever asked the witness's high race,
Whose oath with martyrdom did Stephen grace ?
Ours was a Levite, and as times went then,
His tribe were God Almighty's gentlemen.
Sunk were his eyes, his voice was harsh and loud,
Sure signs he neither choleric was, nor proud :
His long chin proved his wit, his saint-like grace
A church-vermilion, and a Moses' face.
His memory, miraculously great, 650
Could plots, exceeding man's belief, repeat ;
Which therefore cannot be accounted lies,
For human wit could never such devise.
Some future truths are mingled in his book,
But where the witness fail'd, the prophet spoke.
Some things like visionary flights appear ;
The spirit caught him up, the Lord knows where ;
And gave him his rabbinical degree,
Unknown to foreign university.
His judgment yet his memory did excel, 660
Which pieced his wondrous evidence so well,
And suited to the temper of the times,
Then groaning under Jebusitic crimes.
Let Israel's foes suspect his heavenly call,
And rashly judge his writ apocryphal ;

Our laws for such affronts have forfeits made,
He takes his life, who takes away his trade.
Were I myself in witness Corah's place,
The wretch who did me such a dire disgrace,
Should whet my memory, though once forgot, 670
To make him an appendix of my plot.
His zeal to Heaven made him his prince despise,
And load his person with indignities.
But zeal peculiar privilege affords,
Indulging latitude to deeds and words :
And Corah might for Agag's murder call,
In terms as coarse as Samuel used to Saul.
What others in his evidence did join,
The best that could be had for love or coin,
In Corah's own predicament will fall, 680
For witness is a common name to all.

Surrounded thus with friends of every sort,
Deluded Absalom forsakes the court ;
Impatient of high hopes, urged with renown,
And fired with near possession of a crown.
The admiring crowd are dazzled with surprise,
And on his goodly person feed their eyes.
His joy conceal'd, he sets himself to show,
On each side bowing popularly low,
His looks, his gestures, and his words he frames, 690
And with familiar ease repeats their names.
Thus form'd by nature, furnish'd out with arts,
He glides unfelt into their secret hearts.
Then, with a kind compassionating look,
And sighs, bespeaking pity ere he spoke,
Few words he said ; but easy those and fit,
More slow than Hybla-drops, and far more
sweet.

' I mourn, my countrymen, your lost estate,
Though far unable to prevent your fate :
Behold a banish'd man for your dear cause 700
Exposed a prey to arbitrary laws !

Yet, oh ! that I alone could be undone,
 Cut off from empire, and no more a son !
 Now all your liberties a spoil are made,
 Egypt and Tyrus intercept your trade,
 And Jebusites your sacred rites invade. }
 My father, whom with reverence yet I name,
 Charm'd into ease, is careless of his fame
 And, bribed with petty sums of foreign gold,
 Is grown in Bathsheba's embraces old ; 710
 Exalts his enemies, his friends destroys,
 And all his power against himself employs.
 He gives, and let him give, my right away ;
 But why should he his own and yours betray ?
 He, only he, can make the nation bleed,
 And he alone from my revenge is freed.
 Take then my tears, (with that he wiped his eyes)
 'Tis all the aid my present power supplies :
 No court-informer can these arms accuse ;
 These arms may sons against their fathers use. 720
 And 'tis my wish, the next successor's reign
 May make no other Israelite complain.'

Youth, beauty, graceful action seldom fail ;
 But common interest always will prevail :
 And pity never ceases to be shown
 To him who makes the people's wrongs his own.
 The crowd, that still believe their kings oppress,
 With lifted hands their young Messiah bless :
 Who now begins his progress to ordain
 With chariots, horsemen, and a numerous train ; 730
 From east to west his glories he displays,
 And, like the sun, the promised land surveys.
 Fame runs before him as the morning-star,
 And shouts of joy salute him from afar ;
 Each house receives him as a guardian god,
 And consecrates the place of his abode.
 But hospitable treats did most commend
 Wise Issachar, his wealthy western friend.

This moving court, that caught the people's eyes,
And seem'd but pomp, did other ends disguise ; 740
Achitophel had form'd it, with intent
To sound the depths, and fathom where it went
The people's hearts, distinguish friends from foes,
And try their strength, before they came to blows.
Yet all was colour'd with a smooth pretence
Of specious love and duty to their prince.
Religion, and redress of grievances,
Two names that always cheat, and always please,
Are often urged ; and good king David's life
Endanger'd by a brother and a wife. 750
Thus in a pageant show, a plot is made,
And peace itself is war in masquerade.
Oh, foolish Israel ! never warn'd by ill !
Still the same bait, and circumvented still !
Did ever men forsake their present ease,
In midst of health imagine a disease,
Take pains contingent mischiefs to foresee,
Make heirs for monarchs, and for God decree ?
What shall we think ? Can people give away,
Both for themselves and sons, their native sway ? 760
Then they are left defenceless to the sword
Of each unbounded, arbitrary lord ;
And laws are vain, by which we right enjoy,
If kings unquestion'd can those laws destroy.
Yet if the crowd be judge of fit and just,
And kings are only officers in trust,
Then this resuming covenant was declared
When kings were made, or is for ever barr'd.
If those who gave the sceptre could not tie
By their own deed their own posterity, 770
How then could Adam bind his future race ?
How could his forfeit on mankind take place ?
Or how could heavenly justice damn us all,
Who ne'er consented to our father's fall ?
Then kings are slaves to those whom they command,
And tenants to their people's pleasure stand.

Add, that the power for property allow'd
Is mischievously seated in the crowd ;
For who can be secure of private right,
If sovereign sway may be dissolved by might ? 780
Nor is the people's judgment always true ;
The most may err as grossly as the few,
And faultless kings run down by common cry,
For vice, oppression, and for tyranny.
What standard is there in a fickle rout,
Which, flowing to the mark, runs faster out ?
Nor only crowds but Sanhedrins may be
Infected with this public lunacy,
And share the madness of rebellious times,
To murder monarchs for imagined crimes. 790
If they may give and take whene'er they please,
Not kings alone, the Godhead's images,
But government itself at length must fall
To nature's state, where all have right to all.
Yet grant our lords, the people, kings can make,
What prudent men a settled throne would shake ?
For whatsoe'er their sufferings were before,
That change they covet makes them suffer
more.

All other errors but disturb a state ;
But innovation is the blow of fate. 800
If ancient fabrics nod, and threat to fall,
To patch their flaws, and buttress up the wall,
Thus far 'tis duty : but here fix the mark ;
For all beyond it is to touch our ark.
To change foundations, cast the frame anew,
Is work for rebels, who base ends pursue,
At once divine and human laws control,
And mend the parts by ruin of the whole.
The tampering world is subject to this curse.
To physic their disease into a worse. 810

Now what relief can righteous David bring ?
How fatal 'tis to be too good a king !

Friends he has few, so high the madness grows ;
 Who dare be such must be the people's foes.
 Yet some there were, e'en in the worst of days ;
 Some let me name, and naming is to praise.

In this short file Barzillai first appears,
 Barzillai, crown'd with honour and with years.
 Long since, the rising rebels he withstood
 In regions waste beyond the Jordan's flood : 820
 Unfortunately brave, to buoy the state,
 But sinking underneath his master's fate.
 In exile with his godlike prince he mourn'd,
 For him he suffer'd, and with him return'd.
 The court he practised, not the courtier's art :
 Large was his wealth, but larger was his heart,
 Which well the noblest objects knew to choose,
 The fighting warrior, and recording Muse.
 His bed could once a fruitful issue boast ;
 Now more than half a father's name is lost. 830
 His eldest hope, with every grace adorn'd,
 By me, so Heaven will have it, always mourn'd,
 And always honour'd, snatch'd in manhood's prime
 By unequal fates, and providence's crime :
 Yet not before the goal of honour won,
 All parts fulfill'd of subject and of son ;
 Swift was the race, but short the time to run. }
 Oh, narrow circle, but of power divine,
 Scanted in space, but perfect in thy line !
 By sea, by land, thy matchless worth was known, 840
 Arms thy delight, and war was all thy own :
 Thy force, infused, the fainting Tyrians propp'd ;
 And haughty Pharaoh found his fortune stopp'd.
 Oh, ancient honour ! Oh, unconquer'd hand,
 Whom foes unpunish'd never could withstand !
 But Israel was unworthy of thy name ;
 Short is the date of all immoderate fame.
 It looks as Heaven our ruin had design'd,
 And durst not trust thy fortune and thy mind.

Now, free from earth, thy disencumber'd soul 850
 Mounts up, and leaves behind the clouds and starry
 pole :

From thence thy kindred legions mayst thou bring,
 To aid the guardian angel of thy king.

Here stop, my Muse, here cease thy painful flight ;
 No pinions can pursue immortal height :

Tell good Barzillai thou canst sing no more,
 And tell thy soul she should have fled before :

Or fled she with his life, and left this verse

To hang on her departed patron's hearse ?

Now take thy steepy flight from heaven, and
 see 860

If thou canst find on earth another he :

Another he would be too hard to find ;

See then whom thou canst see not far behind.

Zadoc the priest, whom, shunning power and place

His lowly mind advanced to David's grace.

With him the Sagan of Jerusalem,

Of hospitable soul, and noble stem ;

Him of the western dome, whose weighty sense

Flows in fit words and heavenly eloquence.

The prophets' sons, by such example led, 870

To learning and to loyalty were bred :

For colleges on bounteous kings depend,

And never rebel was to arts a friend.

To these succeed the pillars of the laws,

Who best can plead, and best can judge a cause.

Next them a train of loyal peers ascend ;

Sharp-judging Adriel, the Muses' friend.

Himself a Muse : in Sanhedrin's debate

True to his prince, but not a slave of state ;

Whom David's love with honours did adorn, 880

That from his disobedient son were torn.

Jotham of piercing wit, and pregnant thought,

Endued by nature, and by learning taught,

To move assemblies, who but only tried

The worse awhile, then chose the better side,

Nor chose alone, but turn'd the balance too,
 So much the weight of one brave man can do.
 Hushai, the friend of David in distress,
 In public storms, of manly steadfastness ;
 By foreign treaties he informed his youth, 890
 And join'd experience to his native truth.
 His frugal care supplied the wanting throne,
 Frugal for that, but bounteous of his own :
 'Tis easy conduct when exchequers flow,
 But hard the task to manage well the low :
 For sovereign power is too depress'd or high,
 When kings are forced to sell, or crowds to buy.
 Indulge one labour more, my weary Muse,
 For Amiel : who can Amiel's praise refuse ?
 Of ancient race by birth, but nobler yet 900
 In his own worth, and without title great :
 The Sanhedrin long time as chief he ruled,
 Their reason guided, and their passion cool'd ;
 So dexterous was he in the crown's defence,
 So form'd to speak a loyal nation's sense,
 That, as their band was Israel's tribes in small,
 So fit was he to represent them all.
 Now rasher charioteers the seat ascend,
 Whose loose careers his steady skill commend :
 They, like the unequal ruler of the day, 910
 Misguide the seasons, and mistake the way,
 While he, withdrawn, at their mad labours smiles,
 And safe enjoys the sabbath of his toils.

These were the chief, a small but faithful band
 Of worthies, in the breach who dared to stand,
 And tempt the united fury of the land. }
 With grief they view'd such powerful engines bent,
 To batter down the lawful government.
 A numerous faction, with pretended frights,
 In Sanhedrins to plume the regal rights ; 920
 The true successor from the court removed,
 The plot, by hireling witnesses, improved.

These ills they saw, and, as their duty bound,
 They show'd the king the danger of the wound ;
 That no concessions from the throne would please,
 But lenitives fomented the disease ;
 That Absalom, ambitious of the crown,
 Was made the lure to draw the people down ;
 That false Achitophel's pernicious hate
 Had turn'd the plot to ruin church and state ; 930
 The council violent, the rabble worse ;
 That Shimei taught Jerusalem to curse.

With all these loads of injuries oppress'd,
 And long revolving in his careful breast
 The event of things, at last his patience tired,
 Thus, from his royal throne, by Heaven inspired,
 The god-like David spoke ; with awful fear
 His train their Maker in their master hear.

' Thus long have I, by native mercy sway'd,
 My wrongs dissembled, my revenge delay'd ; 940
 So willing to forgive the offending age ;
 So much the father did the king assuage.
 But now so far my clemency they slight,
 The offenders question my forgiving right.
 That one was made for many, they contend ;
 But 'tis to rule, for that's a monarch's end.
 They call my tenderness of blood, my fear,
 Though manly tempters can the longest bear.
 Yet, since they will divert my native course,
 'Tis time to show I am not good by force. 950
 Those heap'd affronts that haughty subjects bring,
 Are burdens for a camel, not a king.
 Kings are the public pillars of the state,
 Born to sustain and prop the nation's weight :
 If my young Samson will pretend a call
 To shake the column, let him share the fall ;
 But oh, that yet he would repent and live !
 How easy 'tis for parents to forgive !

With how few tears a pardon might be won
From nature, pleading for a darling son ! 960
Poor, pitied youth, by my paternal care,
Raised up to all the height his frame could bear !
Had God ordain'd his fate for empire born,
He would have given his soul another turn :
Gull'd with a patriot's name, whose modern sense
Is one that would by law supplant his prince ;
The people's brave, the politician's tool ;
Never was patriot yet, but was a fool.
Whence comes it, that religion and the laws
Should more be Absalom's than David's cause ? 970
His old instructor, ere he lost his place,
Was never thought indued with so much grace.
Good heavens, how faction can a patriot paint !
My rebel ever proves my people's saint.
Would they impose an heir upon the throne ?
Let Sanhedrins be taught to give their own.
A king's at least a part of government ;
And mine as requisite as their consent :
Without my leave a future king to choose,
Infers a right the present to depose. 980
True, they petition me to approve their choice :
But Esau's hands suit ill with Jacob's voice.
My pious subjects for my safety pray,
Which to secure, they take my power away.
From plots and treasons Heaven preserve my years,
But save me most from my petitioners.
Unsate as the barren womb or grave,
God cannot grant so much as they can crave.
What then is left, but with a jealous eye
To guard the small remains of royalty ! 990
The law shall still direct my peaceful sway,
And the same law teach rebels to obey :
Votes shall no more establish'd power control,
Such votes as make a part exceed the whole.
No groundless clamours shall my friends remove,
Nor crowds have power to punish ere they prove ;

For Gods and god-like kings their care express,
Still to defend their servants in distress.

Oh, that my power to saving were confined !
Why am I forced, like Heaven, against my mind, }
To make examples of another kind ? }

Must I at length the sword of justice draw ? 1002

Oh, cursed effects of necessary law !

How ill my fear they by my mercy scan !

Beware the fury of a patient man.

Law they require, let Law then show her face ;

They could not be content to look on Grace,

Her hinder parts, but with a daring eye

To tempt the terror of her front and die.

By their own arts 'tis righteously decreed, 1010

Those dire artificers of death shall bleed.

Against themselves their witnesses will swear,

Till viper-like their mother-plot they tear,

And suck for nutriment that bloody gore,

Which was their principle of life before.

Their Belial with their Beelzebub will fight ;

Thus on my foes, my foes shall do me right.

Nor doubt the event ; for factious crowds engage,

In their first onset, all their brutal rage.

Then let 'em take an unresisted course ; 1020

Retire, and traverse, and delude their force :

But, when they stand all breathless, urge the fight,

And rise upon them with redoubled might :

For lawful power is still superior found,

When long driven back at length it stands the ground.'

He said : The Almighty nodding gave consent ;
And peals of thunder shook the firmament.

Henceforth a series of new time began,

The mighty years in long procession ran ;

Once more the god-like David was restored, 1030

And willing nations knew their lawful lord.

THE SECOND PART OF ABSALOM AND
ACHITOPHEL

(DRYDEN'S SHARE ONLY)

Next these, a troop of busy spirits press, 310
Of little fortunes, and of conscience less ;
With them the tribe, whose luxury has drain'd
Their banks, in former sequesterations gain'd ;
Who rich and great by past rebellions grew,
And long to fish the troubled waves anew.
Some future hopes, some present payment draws,
To sell their conscience and espouse the cause ;
Such stipends those vile hirelings best befit,
Priests without grace, and poets without wit.
Shall that false Hebronite escape our curse, 320
Judas, that keeps the rebels' pension-purse,
Judas, that pays the treason-writer's fee,
Judas, that well deserves his namesake's tree,
Who at Jerusalem's own gates erects
His college for a nursery of sects,
Young prophets with an early care secures,
And with the dung of his own arts manures ?
What have the men of Hebron here to do
What part in Israel's promised land have you ?
Here Phaleg, the lay Hebronite, is come, 330
'Cause, like the rest, he could not live at home ;
Who from his own possessions could not drain
An omer even of Hebronitish grain,
Here struts it like a patriot, and talks high
Of injured subjects, alter'd property :
An emblem of that buzzing insect just,
That mounts the wheel, and thinks she raises dust . . .
A waiting-man to travelling nobles chose, 342
He his own laws would saucily impose,
Till bastinado'd back again he went,
To learn those manners he to teach was sent.

Chastised he ought to have retreated home,
But he reads politics to Absalom ;
For never Hebronite, though kick'd and scorn'd,
To his own country willingly return'd.

But leaving famish'd Phaleg to be fed, 350
And to talk treason for his daily bread,
Let Hebron, nay, let Hell, produce a man
So made for mischief as Ben Jochanan ;
A Jew of humble parentage was he,
By trade a Levite, though of low degree :
His pride no higher than the desk aspired,
But for the drudgery of priests was hired
To read and pray in linen ephod brave,
And pick up single shekels from the grave.
Married at last, but finding charge come faster, 360
He could not live by God, but changed his master :
Inspired by want, was made a factious tool,
They got a villain, and we lost a fool.
Still violent, whatever cause he took,
But most against the party he forsook :
For renegadoes, who ne'er turn by halves,
Are bound in conscience to be double knaves.
So this prose prophet took most monstrous pains
To let his master see he earn'd his gains.
But as the devil owes all his imps a shame, 370
He chose the apostate for his proper theme ;
With little pains he made the picture true,
And from reflection took the rogue he drew,
A wondrous work, to prove the Jewish nation
In every age a murmuring generation,
To trace 'em from their infancy of sinning,
And show 'em factious from their first beginning ;
To prove they could rebel, and rail, and mock,
Much to the credit of the chosen flock ;
A strong authority, which must convince 380
That saints owe no allegiance to their prince ; . . .
But, tell me, did the drunken patriarch bless
The son that show'd his father's nakedness ?

Such thanks the present church thy pen will give,
 Which proves rebellion was so primitive.
 Must ancient failings be examples made ?
 Then murderers from Cain may learn their trade.
 As thou the heathen and the saint hast drawn, 390
 Methinks the Apostate was the better man :
 And thy hot father, waiving my respect,
 Not of a mother-church, but of a sect.
 And such he needs must be of thy inditing,
 This comes of drinking asses' milk and writing.
 If Balak should be call'd to leave his place,
 (As profit is the loudest call of grace),
 His temple, dispossess'd of one, would be
 Replenish'd with seven devils more by thee.

Levi, thou art a load ; I'll lay thee down, 400
 And show rebellion bare, without a gown ;
 Poor slaves in metre, dull and addle-pated,
 Who rhyme below even David's Psalms translated ;
 Some in my speedy pace I must outrun,
 As lame Mephibosheth, the wizard's son ;
 To make quick way, I'll leap o'er heavy blocks,
 Shun rotten Uzza, as I would the pox ;
 And hasten Og and Doeg to rehearse,
 Two fools that crutch their feeble sense on verse ;
 Who, by my muse, to all succeeding times 410
 Shall live, in spite of their own doggerel rhymes.

Doeg, though without knowing how or why,
 Made still a blundering kind of melody ;
 Spurr'd boldly on, and dash'd through thick and
 thin.

Through sense and nonsense, never out nor in ;
 Free from all meaning, whether good or bad,
 And, in one word, heroically mad,
 He was too warm on picking-work to dwell,
 But fagotted his notions as they fell,
 And if they rhymed and rattled, all was well. } 420
 Spiteful he is not, though he wrote a satire,
 For still there goes some thinking to ill-nature ;

He need no more than birds and beasts to think,
All his occasions are to eat and drink.

If he call rogue and rascal from a garret,
He means you no more mischief than a parrot ;
The words for friend and foe alike were made,
To fetter them in verse is all his trade. . . .

Let him be gallows-free by my consent, 431

And nothing suffer since he nothing meant ;
Hanging supposes human soul and reason,
This animal's below committing treason :
Shall he be hang'd who never could rebel ?
That's a preferment for Achitophel. . . .

Railing in other men may be a crime, 441

But ought to pass for mere instinct in him :
Instinct he follows, and no farther knows,
For to write verse with him is to *transprose* ;
'Twere pity treason at his door to lay,
Who makes heaven's gate a lock to its own key ;
Let him rail on, let his invective Muse
Have four-and-twenty letters to abuse,
Which, if he jumbles to one line of sense,
Indict him of a capital offence. 450

In fireworks give him leave to vent his spite,
Those are the only serpents he can write ;
The height of his ambition is, we know,
But to be master of a puppet-show ;
On that one stage his work may yet appear,
And a month's harvest keeps him all the year.

Now stop your noses, readers, all and some, }
For here's a tun of midnight work to come, }
Og, from a treason-tavern rolling home. }
Round as a globe, and liquor'd every chink, 460
Goodly and great, he sails behind his link.
With all this bulk there's nothing lost in Og.
For every inch that is not fool, is rogue : . . .
When wine has given him courage to blaspheme,
He curses God, but God before cursed him ;

And if man could have reason, none has more,
 That made his paunch so rich, and him so poor.
 With wealth he was not trusted, for Heaven
 knew

What 'twas of old to pamper up a Jew ; 471
 To what would he on quail and pheasant swell,
 That even on tripe and carrion could rebel ?
 But though Heaven made him poor (with reverence
 speaking)

He never was a poet of God's making ;
 The midwife laid her hand on his thick skull
 With this prophetic blessing—*Be thou dull !*
 Drink, swear, and roar, forbear no lewd delight,
 Fit for thy bulk, do anything but write,
 Thou art of lasting make, like thoughtless men, 480
 A strong nativity—but for the pen ;
 Eat opium, mingle arsenic in thy drink,
 Still thou mayst live, avoiding pen and ink.

I see, I see, 'tis counsel given in vain,
 For treason, botch'd in rhyme, will be thy bane ;
 Rhyme is the rock on which thou art to wreck ;
 'Tis fatal to thy fame, and to thy neck :
 Why should thy metre good king David blast ?
 A psalm of his will surely be thy last.

Darest thou presume in verse to meet thy foes, 490
 Thou whom the penny pamphlet foil'd in prose ?
 Doeg, whom God for mankind's mirth has made,
 O'ertops thy talent in thy very trade ;
 Doeg to thee—thy paintings are so coarse—
 A poet is, though he's the poet's horse.

A double noose thou on thy neck dost pull,
 For writing treason, and for writing dull ;
 To die for faction is a common evil,
 But to be hang'd for nonsense is the devil.
 Hadst thou glories of thy king express'd, 500
 Thy praises had been satire at the best ;
 But thou, in clumsy verse, unlick'd, unpointed,
 Hast shamefully defied the Lord's anointed :

I will not rake the dunghill of thy crimes,
 For who would read thy life that reads thy rhymes ?
 But of king David's foes, be this the doom,
 May all be like the young man Absalom ;
 And, for my foes, may this their blessing be,
 To talk like Doeg, and to write like thee.

THE MEDAL

A SATIRE AGAINST SEDITION

OF all our antic sights and pageantry,
 Which English idiots run in crowds to see,
 The Polish Medal bears the prize alone ;
 A monster, more the favourite of the town
 Than either fairs or theatres have shown.
 Never did art so well with nature strive,
 Nor ever idol seem'd so much alive ;
 So like the man, so golden to the sight,
 So base within, so counterfeit and light.
 One side is fill'd with title and with face ;
 And, lest the king should want a regal place,
 On the reverse, a tower the town surveys,
 O'er which our mounting sun his beams displays.
 The word, pronounced aloud by shrieval voice,
Lætamur, which, in Polish, is *Rejoice*.
 The day, month, year, to the great act are join'd,
 And a new canting holiday design'd.
 Five days he sat, for every cast and look,
 Four more than God to finish Adam took.
 But who can tell what essence angels are,
 Or how long Heaven was making Lucifer ?
 Oh, could the style that copied every grace,
 And plough'd such furrows for an eunuch face,
 Could it have form'd his ever-changing will,
 The various piece had tired the graver's skill !

A martial hero first, with early care,
 Blown, like a pigmy by the winds, to war.
 A beardless chief, a rebel, ere a man,
 So young his hatred to his Prince began.
 Next this, (how wildly will ambition steer !)
 A vermin wriggling in the usurper's ear.
 Bartering his venal wit for sums of gold,
 He cast himself into the saint-like mould
 Groan'd, sigh'd, and pray'd, while godliness was
 gain,

30

The loudest bagpipe of the squeaking train.
 But, as 'tis hard to cheat a juggler's eyes,
 His open lewdness he could ne'er disguise :
 There split the saint ; for hypocritic zeal
 Allows no sins but those it can conceal.
 Whoring to scandal gives too large a scope ;
 Saints must not trade, but they may interlope.
 The ungodly principle was all the same,
 But a gross cheat betrays his partner's game.
 Besides, their pace was formal, grave, and slack ;
 His nimble wit outran the heavy pack.
 Yet still he found his fortune at a stay,
 Whole droves of blockheads choking up his way :
 They took, but not rewarded, his advice ;
 Villain and wit exact a double price.

40

49

Power was his aim : but, thrown from that pretence
 The wretch turn'd loyal in his own defence,
 And malice reconciled him to his Prince.
 Him in the anguish of his soul he served,
 Rewarded faster still than he deserved.
 Behold him now exalted into trust,
 His counsel's oft convenient, seldom just :
 Even in the most sincere advice he gave,
 He had a grudging still to be a knave.
 The frauds he learn'd in his fanatic years
 Made him uneasy in his lawful gears.
 At best as little honest as he could,
 And, like white witches, mischievously good.

60

To his first bias, longingly, he leans,
 And rather would be great by wicked means.
 Thus framed for ill, he loosed our triple hold,
 (Advice unsafe, precipitous, and bold.)
 From hence those tears ! that Ilium of our woe !
 Who helps a powerful friend, fore-arms a foe.
 What wonder if the waves prevail so far,
 When he cut down the banks that made the bar ? 70
 Seas follow but their nature to invade ;
 But he by art our native strength betray'd.
 So Samson to his foe his force confess'd,
 And to be shorn, lay slumbering on her breast.
 But when this fatal counsel, found too late,
 Exposed its author to the public hate,
 When his just sovereign, by no impious way
 Could be seduced to arbitrary sway,
 Forsaken of that hope he shifts the sail,
 Drives down the current with a popular gale,
 And shows the fiend confess'd without a veil. }
 He preaches to the crowd, that power is lent, 82
 But not convey'd to kingly government,
 That claims successive bear no binding force,
 That coronation oaths are things of course ;
 Maintains the multitude can never err,
 And sets the people in the papal chair.
 The reason's obvious : *interest never lies* ; }
 The most have still their interest in their eyes, }
 The power is always theirs, and power is ever wise }
 Almighty crowd ! thou shortenest all dispute ; 91
 Power is thy essence, wit thy attribute !
 Nor faith nor reason make thee at a stay,
 Thou leap'st o'er all eternal truths in thy Pindaric way !
 Athens, no doubt, did righteously decide,
 When Phocion and when Socrates were tried ;
 As righteously they did those dooms repent
 Still they were wise whatever way they went.
 Crowds err not, though to both extremes they run ;
 To kill the father, and recall the son. 100

Some think the fools were most as times went then,
But now the world 's o'erstock'd with prudent men.
The common cry is even religion's test ;
The Turk's is at Constantinople best ;
Idols in India, Popery at Rome,
And our own worship only true at home.
And true, but for the time ; 'tis hard to know
How long we please it shall continue so ;
This side to-day, and that to-morrow burns ;
So all are God a'mighties in their turns. 110
A tempting doctrine, plausible and new ;
What fools our fathers were, if this be true !
Who, to destroy the seeds of civil war,
Inherent right in monarch's did declare ;
And, that a lawful power might never cease,
Secured succession to secure our peace.
Thus property and sovereign sway, at last,
In equal balances were justly cast ;
But this new Jehu spurs the hot-mouth'd horse,
Instructs the beast to know his native force, 120
To take the bit between his teeth, and fly
To the next headlong steep of anarchy.
Too happy England, if our good we knew,
Would we possess the freedom we pursue !
The lavish government can give no more ;
Yet we repine, and plenty makes us poor.
God tried us once ; our rebel-fathers fought ;
He glutted them with all the power they sought,
Till, master'd by their own usurping brave,
The free-born subject sunk into a slave. 130
We loathe our manna, and we long for quails ;
Ah, what is man when his own wish prevails !
How rash, how swift to plunge himself in ill,
Proud of his power, and boundless in his will !
That kings can do no wrong we must believe ;
None can they do, and must they all receive ?
Help, Heaven ! or sadly we shall see an hour,
When neither wrong nor right are in their power !

Already they have lost their best defence,
 The benefit of laws which they dispense. 140
 No justice to their righteous cause allow'd :
 But baffled by an arbitrary crowd ;
 And medals graved their conquest to record,
 The stamp and coin of their adopted lord.

The man who laugh'd but once, to see an ass
 Mumbling to make the cross-grain'd thistles pass,
 Might laugh again to see a jury chaw
 The prickles of unpalatable law.
 The witnesses, that leech-like lived on blood,
 Sucking for them were med'cinally good ; 150
 But when they fasten'd on their fester'd sore,
 Then justice and religion they forswore ;
 Their maiden oaths debauch'd into a whore,
 Thus men are raised by factions and decried,
 And rogue and saint distinguish'd by their side ;
 They rack even Scripture to confess their cause,
 And plead a call to preach in spite of laws.
 But that's no news to the poor injured page,
 It has been used as ill in every age,
 And is constrain'd, with patience, all to take, 160
 For what defence can Greek and Hebrew make ?
 Happy who can this talking trumpet seize,
 They make it speak whatever sense they please !
 'Twas framed at first our oracle to inquire ;
 But since our sects in prophecy grow higher,
 The text inspired not them, but they the text inspire } 170

London, thou great emporium of our isle,
 O thou too bounteous, thou too fruitful Nile !
 How shall I praise or curse to thy desert ?
 Or separate thy sound from thy corrupted part ? 170
 I call'd thee Nile ; the parallel will stand ;
 Thy tides of wealth o'erflow the fatten'd land ;
 Yet monsters from thy large increase we find,
 Engender'd on the slime thou leav'st behind.

Sedition has not wholly seized on thee,
Thy nobler parts are from infection free.
Of Israel's tribes thou hast a numerous band,
But still the Canaanite is in the land.
Thy military chiefs are brave and true,
Nor are thy disenchanted burghers few. 180
The head is loyal which thy heart commands,
But what's a head with two such gouty hands ?
The wise and wealthy love the surest way,
And are content to thrive and to obey.
But wisdom is to sloth too great a slave ;
None are so busy as the fool and knave.
Those let me curse ; what vengeance will they
 urge,
Whose ordures neither plague nor fire can purge,
Nor sharp experience can to duty bring,
Nor angry Heaven, nor a forgiving king ! 190
In gospel-phrase their chapmen they betray ;
Their shops are dens, the buyer is their prey.
The knack of trades is living on the spoil ;
They boast, e'en when each other they beguile.
Customs to steal is such a trivial thing,
That 'tis their charter to defraud their king.
All hands unite of every jarring sect ;
They cheat the country first, and then infect.
They for God's cause their monarchs dare dethrone
And they'll be sure to make his cause their own. 200
Whether the plotting Jesuit laid the plan
Of murdering kings, or the French Puritan,
Our sacrilegious sects their guides outgo,
And kings and kingly power would murder too.

What means their traitorous combination less,
Too plain to evade, too shameful to confess ?
But treason is not own'd when 'tis descried ;
Successful crimes alone are justified.
The men, who no conspiracy would find,
Who doubts, but had it taken, they had join'd ? 210

Join'd in a mutual covenant of defence,
 At first without, at last against their prince ?
 If sovereign right by sovereign power they scan,
 The same bold maxim holds in God and man :
 God were not safe ; his thunder could they shun,
 He should be forced to crown another son.
 Thus when the heir was from the vineyard thrown,
 The rich possession was the murderers' own.
 In vain to sophistry they have recourse ;
 By proving theirs no plot, they prove 't is worse,
 Unmask'd rebellion, and audacious force,
 Which though not actual, yet all eyes may see 222
 'Tis working in the immediate power to be ;
 For from pretended grievances they rise,
 First to dislike, and after to despise ;
 Then Cyclop-like in human flesh to deal,
 Chop up a minister at every meal ;
 Perhaps not wholly to melt down the king,
 But clip his regal rights within the ring ;
 From thence to assume the power of peace and
 war, 230
 And ease him by degrees of public care.
 Yet, to consult his dignity and fame,
 He should have leave to exercise the name ;
 And hold the cards while Commons play'd the game.
 For what can power give more than food and drink,
 To live at ease, and not be bound to think ?
 These are the cooler methods of their crime,
 But their hot zealots think 'tis loss of time ;
 On utmost bounds of loyalty they stand,
 And grin and whet like a Croatian band,
 That waits impatient for the last command :
 Thus outlaws open villainy maintain ; 242
 They steal not, but in squadrons scour the plain ;
 And if their power the passengers subdue,
 The most have right, the wrong is in the few.
 Such impious axioms foolishly they show,
 For in some soils Republics will not grow ;

Our temperate Isle will no extremes sustain,
 Of popular sway or arbitrary reign :
 But slides between them both into the best, 250
 Secure in freedom, in a monarch blest.
 And though the climate, vex'd with various winds,
 Works through our yielding bodies on our minds,
 The wholesome tempest purges what it breeds,
 To recommend the calmness that succeeds.

But thou, the pander of the people's hearts,
 (O crooked soul, and serpentine in arts!) . . .
 What curses on thy blasted name will fall !
 Which age to age their legacy shall call,
 For all must curse the woes that must descend
 on all ! 262

Religion thou hast none : thy Mercury
 Has pass'd through every sect, or theirs through
 thee.

But what thou giv'st, that venom still remains,
 And the pox'd nation feels thee in their brains.
 What else inspires the tongues and swells the
 breasts

Of all thy bellowing renegado priests,
 That preach up thee for God, dispense thy laws,
 And with thy stum ferment thy fainting cause, 270
 Fresh fumes of madness raise, and toil and sweat
 To make the formidable cripple great ?
 Yet should thy crimes succeed, should lawless
 power

Compass those ends thy greedy hopes devour,
 Thy canting friends thy mortal foes would be,
 Thy God and theirs will never long agree ;
 For thine (if thou hast any) must be one
 That lets the world and human-kind alone ;
 A jolly god, that passes hours too well
 To promise Heaven, or threaten us with Hell : 280
 That unconcern'd can at rebellion sit,
 And wink at crimes he did himself commit.

A tyrant theirs ; the heaven their priesthood paints
 A conventicle of gloomy sullen saints ;
 A heaven like Bedlam, slovenly and sad,
 Fore-doom'd for souls, with false religion mad.

Without a vision poets can foreshow
 What all but fools by common sense may know :
 If true succession from our Isle should fail,
 And crowds profane with impious arms prevail, 290
 Not thou, nor those thy factious arts engage,
 Shall reap that harvest of rebellious rage,
 With which thou flatterest thy decrepit age.
 The swelling poison of the several sects,
 Which, wanting vent, the nation's health infects,
 Shall burst its bag ; and fighting out their way,
 The various venoms on each other prey.
 The Presbyter, puff'd up with spiritual pride,
 Shall on the necks of the lewd nobles ride,
 His brethren damn, the civil power defy, 300
 And parcel out republic prelacy.
 But short shall be his reign : his rigid yoke
 And tyrant power will puny sects provoke,
 And frogs and toads, and all their tadpole train,
 Will croak to Heaven for help, from this devouring
 crane,

The cut-throat sword and clamouring gown shall
 jar,

In sharing their ill-gotten spoils of war ;
 Chiefs shall be grudged the part which they pre-
 tend ;

Lords envy lords, and friends with every friend
 About their impious merit shall contend.

The surly Commons shall respect deny,
 And jostle peerage out with property.

Their General either shall his trust betray,
 And force the crowd to arbitrary sway,
 Or they, suspecting his ambitious aim,
 In hate of kings shall cast anew the frame,
 And thrust out Collatine that bore their name,

Thus inborn broils the factions would engage,
 Or wars of exiled heirs, or foreign rage,
 Till halting vengeance overtook our age,
 And our wild labours wearied into rest,
 Reclined us on a rightful monarch's breast.

321

*'Pudet haec opprobria vobis
 Et dici potuisse et non potuisse refelli.'*

MAC FLECKNOE

ALL human things are subject to decay,
 And when fate summons, monarchs must
 obey.

This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
 Was call'd to empire, and had govern'd long,
 In prose and verse, was own'd, without dispute,
 Through all the realms of Nonsense, absolute.
 This aged prince, now flourishing in peace,
 And bless'd with issue of a large increase,
 Worn out with business, did at length debate
 To settle the succession of the state ;
 And, pondering, which of all his sons was fit
 To reign, and wage immortal war with wit,
 Cried, ' 'Tis resolved ; for Nature pleads, that he
 Should only rule, who most resembles me.
 Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
 Mature in dulness from his tender years ;
 Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he,
 Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity,
 The rest to some faint meaning make pretence.
 But Shadwell never deviates into sense.
 Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
 Strike through, and make a lucid interval ;
 But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
 His rising fogs prevail upon the day.

10

20

Besides, his goodly fabric fills the eye,
 And seems design'd for thoughtless majesty,
 Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain,
 And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.
 Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee,
 Thou last great prophet of tautology. 30
 Even I, a dunce of more renown than they,
 Was sent before but to prepare thy way,
 And, coarsely clad in Norwich drugget, came
 To teach the nations in thy greater name.
 My warbling lute, the lute I whilom strung,
 When to King John of Portugal I sung,
 Was but the prelude to that glorious day,
 When thou on silver Thames didst cut thy way,
 With well-timed oars before the royal barge,
 Swell'd with the pride of thy celestial charge, 40
 And big with hymn, commander of an host;
 The like was ne'er in Epsom blankets toss'd.
 Methinks I see the new Arion sail,
 The lute still trembling underneath thy nail.
 At thy well-sharpen'd thumb from shore to shore
 The trebles squeak for fear, the basses roar;
 Echoes from Pissing-Alley Shadwell call,
 And Shadwell they resound from Aston Hall.
 About thy boat the little fishes throng,
 As at the morning toast that floats along. 50
 Sometimes, as prince of thy harmonious band,
 Thou wield'st thy papers in thy threshing hand.
 St. André's feet ne'er kept more equal time,
 Not even the feet of thy own Psyche's rhyme:
 Though they in number as in sense excel,
 So just, so like tautology, they fell,
 That, pale with envy, Singleton forswore
 The lute and sword, which he in triumph bore,
 And vow'd he ne'er would act Villerius more.' }

Here stopp'd the good old sire, and wept for
 joy,
 In silent raptures of the hopeful boy. 60

All arguments, but most his plays, persuade,
That for anointed dulness he was made.

Close to the walls which fair Augusta bind,
(The fair Augusta much to fears inclined),
An ancient fabric raised to inform the sight,
There stood of yore, and Barbican it hight ;
A watch-tower once, but now, so fate ordains,
Of all the pile an empty name remains. . . .
Near these a Nursery erects its head, 70
Where queens are form'd, and future heroes bred,
Where unfledged actors learn to laugh and cry, }
Where infant punks their tender voices try, }
And little Maximins the gods defy.

Great Fletcher never treads in buskins here,
Nor greater Jonson dares in socks appear ;
But gentle Simkin just reception finds
Amidst this monument of vanish'd minds ;
Pure clinches the suburban muse affords,
And Panton waging harmless war with words. 80
Here Flecknoe, as a place to fame well known,
Ambitiously design'd his Shadwell's throne.
For ancient Decker prophecies long since,
That in this pile should reign a mighty prince, }
Born for a scourge of wit, and flail of sense, }
To whom true dulness should some ' Psyches ' owe,
But worlds of ' Misers ' from his pen should flow ;
' Humorists ' and Hypocrites it should produce,
Whole Raymond families, and tribes of Bruce.

Now Empress Fame had publish'd the renown 90
Of Shadwell's coronation through the town.
Roused by report of fame, the nations meet,
From near Bunhill, and distant Watling-street.
No Persian carpets spread the imperial way,
But scatter'd limbs of mangled poets lay ; . . .
Much Heywood, Shirley, Ogleby there lay,
But loads of Shadwell almost choked the way.
Bilk'd stationers for yeomen stood prepared,
And Herringman was captain of the guard.

The hoary prince in majesty appear'd, 100
 High on a throne of his own labours rear'd.
 At his right hand our young Ascanius sat,
 Rome's other hope, and pillar of the state.
 His brows thick fogs, instead of glories, grace,
 And lambent dulness play'd around his face.
 As Hannibal did to the altars come,
 Sworn by his sire, a mortal foe to Rome ;
 So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain,
 That he till death true dulness would maintain ;
 And, in his father's right, and realm's defence, 110
 Ne'er to have peace with wit, nor truce with sense.
 The king himself the sacred unction made,
 As king by office, and as priest by trade.
 In his sinister hand, instead of ball,
 He placed a mighty mug of potent ale ;
 ' Love's Kingdom ' to his right he did convey,
 At once his sceptre, and his rule of sway ;
 Whose righteous lore the prince had practised young,
 And from whose loins recorded ' Psyche ' sprung.
 His temples, last, with poppies were o'erspread, 120
 That nodding seem'd to consecrate his head.
 Just at the point of time, if fame not lie,
 On his left hand twelve reverend owls did fly.
 So Romulus, 'tis sung, by Tiber's brook,
 Presage of sway from twice six vultures took.
 The admiring throng loud acclamations make,
 And omens of his future empire take.
 The sire then shook the honours of his head,
 And from his brows damps of oblivion shed
 Full on the filial dulness : long he stood 130
 Repelling from his breast the raging god ;
 At length burst out in this prophetic mood :—
 ' Heavens bless my son ! from Ireland let him
 reign
 To far Barbadoes on the western main ;
 Of his dominion may no end be known,
 And greater than his father's be his throne ;

Beyond " Love's Kingdom " let him stretch his pen ! '
He paused, and all the people cried, Amen.
Then thus continued he : ' My son, advance
Still in new impudence, new ignorance. 140
Success let others teach, learn thou from me
Pangs without birth, and fruitless industry.
Let ' Virtuosos ' in five years be writ ;
Yet not one thought accuse thy toil of wit.
Let gentle George in triumph tread the stage,
Make Dorimant betray, and Loveit rage ;
Let Cully, Cockwood, Fopling, charm the pit,
And in their folly show the writer's wit.
Yet still thy fools shall stand in thy defence,
And justify their author's want of sense. 150
Let them be all by thy own model made
Of dulness, and desire no foreign aid,
That they to future ages may be known,
Not copies drawn, but issue of thy own.
Nay, let thy men of wit too be the same,
All full of thee, and differing but in name.
But let no alien Sedley interpose,
To lard with wit thy hungry Epsom prose.
And when false flowers of rhetoric thou wouldst cull,
Trust nature, do not labour to be dull ; 160
But write thy best, and top ; and, in each line,
Sir Formal's oratory will be thine.
Sir Formal, though unsought, attends thy quill,
And does thy northern dedications fill.
Nor let false friends seduce thy mind to fame,
By arrogating Jonson's hostile name ;
Let Father Flecknoe fire thy mind with praise,
And Uncle Ogleby thy envy raise.
Thou art my blood, where Jonson has no part :
What share have we in nature, or in art ? 170
Where did his wit on learning fix a brand,
And rail at arts he did not understand ?
Where made he love in Prince Nicander's vein,
Or swept the dust in Psyche's humble strain ? . . .

When did his Muse from Fletcher scenes purloin,
 As thou whole Etherege dost transfuse to thine ?
 But so transfused, as oils on waters flow,
 His always floats above, thine sinks below.
 This is thy province, this thy wondrous way,
 New humours to invent for each new play : 180
 This is that boasted bias of thy mind,
 By which one way to dulness 'tis inclined,
 Which makes thy writings lean on one side still,
 And, in all changes, that way bends thy will.
 Nor let thy mountain-belly make pretence
 Of likeness ; thine's a tympany of sense.
 A tun of man in thy large bulk is writ,
 But sure thou art but a kilderkin of wit.
 Like mine, thy gentle numbers feebly creep ;
 Thy tragic Muse gives smiles, thy comic sleep. 190
 With whate'er gall thou sett'st thyself to write,
 Thy inoffensive satires never bite ;
 In thy felonious art though venom lies,
 It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dies.
 Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame
 In keen Iambics, but mild Anagram.
 Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command,
 Some peaceful province in Acrostic land.
 There thou may'st wings display and altars raise,
 And torture one poor word ten thousand ways ; 200
 Or, if thou would'st thy different talents suit,
 Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute.
 He said ; but his last words were scarcely heard,
 For Bruce and Longville had a trap prepared,
 And down they sent the yet declaiming bard.
 Sinking he left his drugget robe behind,
 Borne upwards by a subterranean wind.
 The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,
 With double portion of his father's art.

RELIGIO LAICI ; OR, A LAYMAN'S FAITH

DIM, as the borrow'd beams of moon and stars
 To lonely, weary, wandering travellers,
 Is Reason to the soul : and as on high
 Those rolling fires discover but the sky
 Not light us here ; so Reason's glimmering ray
 Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
 But guide us upward to a better day. }
 And as those nightly tapers disappear,
 When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere ;
 So pale grows Reason at Religion's sight ; 10
 So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.
 Some few, whose lamp shone brighter, have been led
 From cause to cause, to nature's secret head ;
 And found that one first principle must be ;
 But what, or who, that UNIVERSAL HE ;
 Whether some soul incompassing this ball,
 Unmade, unmoved ; yet making, moving all ;
 Or various atom's interfering dance
 Leap'd into form, (the noble work of chance),
 Or this great all was from eternity ; 20
 Not ev'n the Stagirite himself could see ;
 And Epicurus guess'd as well as he.
 As blindly groped they for a future state ;
 As rashly judged of providence and fate ;
 But least of all could their endeavours
 find
 What most concern'd the good of human
 kind ;
 For happiness was never to be found ;
 But vanish'd from 'em, like enchanted
 ground.

Opinions of
 the several
 sects of Phil-
 osophers con-
 cerning the
 S u m m u m
 Bonum

One thought Content the good to be enjoy'd ;
 This every little accident destroy'd : 30
 The wiser madmen did for Virtue toil,
 A thorny, or at best a barren soil :

In Pleasure some their glutton souls would steep,
 But found their line too short, the well too deep,
 And leaky vessels which no bliss could keep. }
 Thus, anxious thoughts in endless circles roll,
 Without a centre where to fix the soul :
 In this wild maze their vain endeavours end ;
 How can the less the greater comprehend ?
 Or finite reason reach Infinity ? 40
 For what could fathom God were more than He.

The Deist thinks he stands on firmer ground,
 Cries, Eureka—the mighty secret's found : **System of**
 God is that spring of good; supreme, and best, **Deism**
 We, made to serve, and in that service blest :
 If so, some rules of worship must be given,
 Distributed alike to all by Heaven ;
 Else God were partial, and to some denied
 The means his justice should for all provide.
 This general worship is to praise, and pray : 50
 One part to borrow blessings, one to pay :
 And when frail nature slides into offence,
 The sacrifice for crimes is penitence.
 Yet, since the effects of providence, we find,
 Are variously dispensed to human kind ;
 That vice triumphs, and virtue suffers here,
 (A brand that sovereign justice cannot bear ;)
 Our reason prompts us to a future state,
 The last appeal from fortune, and from fate,
 Where God's all-righteous ways will be declared 60
 The bad meet punishment, the good reward.

Thus man by his own strength to heaven would soar :
 And would not be obliged to God for more. **Of Revealed**
 Vain, wretched creature, how art thou **Religion**
 misled

To think thy wit these god-like notions bred !
 These truths are not the product of thy mind,
 But dropt from Heaven, and of a nobler kind.

Revealed Religion first inform's thy sight,
 And Reason saw not, till Faith sprung the light.
 Hence all thy natural worship takes the source : 70
 'Tis revelation what thou think'st discourse.
 Else how com'st thou to see these truths so clear,
 Which so obscure to Heathens did appear ?
 Not Plato these, nor Aristotle found.

Nor he whose wisdom oracles renown'd. **Socrates**

Hast thou a wit so deep, or so sublime,
 Or canst thou lower dive, or higher climb ?
 Canst thou, by reason, more of Godhead know
 Than Plutarch, Seneca, or Cicero ?

Those giant wits in happier ages born, 80
 (When arms, and arts did Greece and Rome
 adorn,)

Knew no such system : no such piles could raise
 Of natural worship, built on prayer and praise,
 To one sole GOD.

Nor did remorse to expiate sin prescribe :
 But slew their fellow-creatures for a bribe :
 The guiltless victim groan'd for their offence ;
 And cruelty and blood was penitence.

If sheep and oxen could atone for men,
 Ah ! at how cheap a rate the rich might sin 90
 And great oppressors might Heaven's wrath beguile,
 By offering his own creatures for a spoil !

Dar'st thou, poor worm, offend Infinity ?
 And must the terms of peace be given by thee ?
 Then thou art Justice in the last appeal ;
 Thy easy God instructs thee to rebel :
 And, like a king remote, and weak, must take
 What satisfaction thou art pleased to make.

But if there be a power too just, and strong
 To wink at crimes, and bear unpunish'd wrong ; 100
 Look humbly upward, see his will disclose
 The forfeit first, and then the fine impose :

A mulct thy poverty could never pay,
 Had not Eternal Wisdom found the way :
 And with celestial wealth supplied thy store :
 His justice makes the fine, his mercy quits the score.
 See God descending in thy human frame ;
 The offended, suffering in the offender's name :
 All thy misdeeds to him imputed see,
 And all his righteousness devolved on thee. 110

For granting we have sinn'd, and that the offence
 Of man, is made against Omnipotence,
 Some price, that bears proportion, must be paid,
 And infinite with infinite be weigh'd.
 See then the Deist lost : remorse for vice
 Not paid, or paid, inadequate in price :
 What farther means can Reason now direct,
 Or what relief from human wit expect ?
 That shows us sick ; and sadly are we sure
 Still to be sick, till Heaven reveal the cure : 120
 If then Heaven's will must needs be understood,
 (Which must, if we want cure, and Heaven be good,)
 Let all records of will revealed be shown ;
 With Scripture, all in equal balance thrown,
 And our one sacred book will be that one. }

Proof needs not here ; for whether we compare
 That impious, idle, superstitious ware
 Of rites, lustrations, offerings, (which before,
 In various ages, various countries bore,)
 With Christian faith and virtues, we shall find 130
 None answering the great ends of human kind,
 But this one rule of life ; that shows us best,
 How God may be appeased, and mortals blest.
 Whether from length of time its worth we draw,
 The world is scarce more ancient than the law :
 Heaven's early care prescribed for every age ;
 First, in the soul, and after in the page.

Or, whether more abstractedly we look,
 Or on the writers, or the written book,
 Whence, but from Heaven, could men unskill'd in
 arts, 140

In several ages born, in several parts,
 Weave such agreeing truths? or how, or why,
 Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?
 Unask'd their pains, ungrateful their advice,
 Starving their gain, and martyrdom their price.

If on the book itself we cast our view,
 Concurrent heathens prove the story true:
 The doctrine, miracles; which must convince,
 For Heaven in them appeals to human sense:
 And though they prove not, they confirm the cause,
 When what is taught agrees with nature's laws. 151

Then for the style, majestic and divine,
 It speaks no less than God in every line;
 Commanding words; whose force is still the same
 As the first fiat that produced our frame.
 All faiths beside, or did by arms ascend;
 Or sense indulged has made mankind their friend;
 This only doctrine does our lusts oppose:
 Unfed by nature's soil, in which it grows;
 Cross to our interests, curbing sense and sin; 160
 Oppress'd without, and undermined within,
 It thrives through pain; its own tormentors tires;
 And with a stubborn patience still aspires.
 To what can Reason such effects assign,
 Transcending nature, but to laws divine?
 Which in that sacred volume are contain'd;
 Sufficient, clear, and for that use ordain'd.

But stay: the Deist here will urge anew
 No supernatural worship can be true: **Objection of**
 Because a general law is that alone **the Deist**
 Which must to all, and every where, be known: 171

A style so large as not this book can claim,
 Nor aught that bears revealed religion's name.
 'Tis said the sound of a Messiah's birth
 Is gone through all the habitable earth :
 But still that text must be confined alone
 To what was then inhabited, and known :
 And what provision could from thence accrue
 To Indian souls, and worlds discover'd new ?
 In other parts it helps, that ages past, 180
 The Scriptures there were known, and were embraced,
 Till Sin spread once again the shades of night :
 What's that to these who never saw the light ?

Of all objections this indeed is chief, **The objection**
 To startle reason, stagger frail belief : **answered**
 We grant, 'tis true, that Heaven from human sense
 Has hid the secret paths of Providence ;
 But boundless wisdom, boundless mercy, may
 Find even for those bewilder'd souls, a way :
 If from his nature, foes may pity claim, 190
 Much more may strangers who ne'er heard his
 name.

And though no name be for salvation known,
 But that of his eternal Son's alone ;
 Who knows how far transcending goodness can
 Extend the merits of that Son to man ?
 Who knows what reasons may his mercy lead ;
 Or ignorance invincible may plead ?
 Not only charity bids hope the best,
 But more the great apostle has express'd :
 That, if the Gentiles, (whom no law inspired,) 200
 By nature did what was by law required ;
 They, who the written rule had never known,
 Were to themselves both rule and law alone ;
 To nature's plain indictment they shall plead ;
 And, by their conscience be condemn'd or freed.
 Most righteous doom ! because a rule revealed
 Is none to those, from whom it was concealed.

Then those who follow'd Reason's dictates right,
Lived up, and lifted high their natural light ;
With Socrates may see their Maker's face, 210
While thousand rubric martyrs want a place.

Nor does it balk my charity, to find
The Egyptian bishop of another mind :
For, though his creed eternal truth contains,
'Tis hard for man to doom to endless pains
All who believed not all, his zeal required ;
Unless he first could prove he was inspired.
Then let us either think he meant to say
This faith, where publish'd, was the only way ;
Or else conclude, that, Arius to confute,
The good old man, too eager in dispute,
Flew high ; and, as his Christian fury rose,
Damn'd all for heretics who durst oppose.

Thus far my charity this path has tried,
(A much unskilful, but well-meaning
guide :)
Yet what they are, e'en these crude
thoughts were bred
By reading that which better thou
hast read,
Thy matchless author's work : which
thou, my friend,
By well translating better dost commend :
Those youthful hours, which, of thy equals most 230
In toys have squander'd, or in vice have lost,
Those hours hast thou to nobler use employ'd ;
And the severe delights of truth enjoy'd.
Witness this weighty book, in which appears
The crabbed toil of many thoughtful years,
Spent by thy author, in the sifting care
Of Rabbins' old sophisticated ware
From gold divine, which he who well can sort
May afterwards make algebra a sport.

A treasure, which if country curates buy, 240
 They Junius and Tremellius may defy :
 Save pains in various readings, and translations,
 And without Hebrew make most learn'd quotations.
 A work so full with various learning fraught,
 So nicely ponder'd, yet so strongly wrought,
 As Nature's height and Art's last hand required ;
 As much as man could compass, uninspired.
 Where we may see what errors have been made
 Both in the copiers' and translators' trade :
 How Jewish—Popish—interests, have prevail'd, 250
 And where infallibility has fail'd.

For some, who have his secret meaning guess'd,
 Have found our author not too much a priest ;
 For fashion-sake he seems to have recourse
 To Pope, and Councils, and Tradition's force :
 But he that old traditions could subdue,
 Could not but find the weakness of the new :
 If Scripture, though derived from heavenly birth,
 Has been but carelessly preserved on earth ;
 If God's own people, who of God before 260
 Knew what we know, and had been promised more,
 In fuller terms, of Heaven's assisting care,
 And who did neither time, nor study spare
 To keep this book untainted, unperplex'd ;
 Let in gross errors to corrupt the text,
 Omitted paragraphs, embroil'd the sense,
 With vain traditions stopp'd the gaping fence,
 Which every common hand pull'd up with ease :
 What safety from such brushwood-helps as
 these ?

If written words from time are not secured, 270
 How can we think have oral sounds endured ?
 Which thus transmitted, if one mouth has fail'd,
 Immortal lies on ages are entail'd ;
 And that some such have been, is proved too
 plain ;

If we consider Interest, Church, and Gain.

Oh, but, says one, Tradition set aside, **Of the Infal-**
 Where can we hope for an unerring guide ? **libility of**
 For since the original Scripture has been **Tradition in**
 lost, **general**
 All copies disagreeing, maim'd the most,
 Or Christian faith can have no certain ground, 280
 Or truth in Church Tradition must be found.

Such an omniscient Church we wish indeed ;
 'Twere worth both Testaments, and cast in the Creed :
 But if this mother be a guide so sure,
 As can all doubts resolve, all truth secure,
 Then her infallibility, as well,
 Where copies are corrupt, or lame, can tell ;
 Restore lost canon with as little pains,
 As truly explicate what still remains : 289
 Which yet no Council dare pretend to do ;
 Unless like Esdras, they could write it new :
 Strange confidence, still to interpret true,
 Yet not be sure that all they have explain'd,
 Is in the blest original contain'd.
 More safe, and much more modest 'tis, to say
 God would not leave mankind without a way :
 And that the Scriptures, though not everywhere
 Free from corruption, or entire, or clear,
 Are uncorrupt, sufficient, clear, entire,
 In all things which our needful faith require. 300
 If others in the same glass better see,
 'Tis for themselves they look, but not for me :
 For *my* salvation must its doom receive,
 Not from what *others* but what *I* believe.

Must all tradition then be set aside ?— **Objection in**
 This to affirm were ignorance or pride. **behalf of tra-**
 Are there not many points, some needful, **dition ; urg'd**
 sure, **by F a t h e r**
 To saving faith, that Scripture leaves **Simon**
 obscure ?

Which every sect will wrest a several way,
 (For what one sect interprets, all sects may :) 310
 We hold, and say we prove from Scripture plain,
 That Christ is God ; the bold Socinian }
 From the same Scripture urges he's but *MAN*. }
 Now what appeal can end the important suit ?
 Both parts talk loudly, but the rule is mute.

Shall I speak plain, and in a nation free
 Assume an honest layman's liberty ?
 I think, (according to my little skill—
 To my own mother-church submitting still)
 That many have been saved, and many may, 320
 Who never heard this question brought in play.
 The unletter'd Christian, who believes in gross,
 Plods on to heaven, and ne'er is at a loss :
 For the strait-gate would be made straiter yet,
 Were none admitted there but men of wit.
 The few, by nature form'd, with learning fraught,
 Born to instruct, as others to be taught,
 Must study well the sacred page ; and see
 Which doctrine, this, or that, does best agree
 With the whole tenor of the work divine ; 330
 And plainliest points to Heaven's reveal'd design :
 Which exposition flows from genuine sense ;
 And which is forced by wit and eloquence.
 Not that tradition's parts are useless here :
 When general, old, disinterested, and clear :
 That ancient Fathers thus expound the page,
 Gives truth the reverend majesty of age,
 Confirms its force, by biding every test ;
 For best authority's next rules are best :
 And still the nearer to the spring we go, 340
 More limpid, more unsoil'd, the waters flow.
 Thus, first traditions were a proof alone ;
 Could we be certain such they were, so known :
 But since some flaws in long descent may be,
 They make not truth but probability.

Even Arius and Pelagius durst provoke
 To what the centuries preceding spoke.
 Such difference is there in an oft-told tale :
 But truth by its own sinews will prevail.
 Tradition written therefore more commends
 Authority, than what from voice descends :
 And this, as perfect as its kind can be,
 Rolls down to us the sacred history :
 Which, from the Universal Church received,
 Is tried, and after, for itself believed. 350

The partial Papists would infer from
 hence,
 Their Church, in last resort, should
 judge the sense. **The Second**

But first they would assume, with
 wondrous art,
 Themselves to be the whole, who are **Answer to**
 but part **the objection**

Of that vast frame, the Church ; yet grant
 they were 360

The handers down, can they from thence infer
 A right t' interpret ? or would they alone,
 Who brought the present, claim it for their own ?
 The Book's a common largess to mankind ;
 Not more for them than every man design'd ;
 The welcome news is in the letter found ;
 The carrier's not commission'd to expound.
 It speaks itself, and what it does contain,
 In all things needful to be known, is plain.

In times o'ergrown with rust and ignorance, 370
 A gainful trade their clergy did advance ;
 When want of learning kept the laymen low,
 And none but priests were authorised to know ;
 When what small knowledge was, in them did dwell,
 And he a god who could but read or spell ;
 Then Mother Church did mightily prevail :
 She parcell'd out the Bible by retail :

But still expounded what she sold or gave ;
 To keep it in her power to damn and save :
 Scripture was scarce, and as the market went, 380
 Poor laymen took salvation on content ;
 As needy men take money, good or bad ;
 God's words they had not, but the priest's they
 had.

Yet, whate'er false conveyances they made,
 The lawyer still was certain to be paid.
 In those dark times they learn'd their knack so well,
 That by long use they grew infallible :
 At last, a knowing age began to inquire
 If they the Book, or that did them inspire :
 And, making narrower search, they found, though
 late, 390

That what they thought the priest's, was their estate ;
 Taught by the will produced, (the written word,)
 How long they had been cheated on record.
 Then, every man who saw the title fair,
 Claim'd a child's part, and put in for a share ;
 Consulted soberly his private good ;
 And saved himself as cheap as e'er he could.

'Tis true, my friend, (and far be flattery hence,)
 This good has full as bad a consequence :
 The Book thus put in every vulgar hand, 400
 Which each presumed he best could understand,
 The common rule was made the common prey ;
 And at the mercy of the rabble lay.
 The tender page with horny fists was gall'd ;
 And he was gifted most that loudest bawl'd ;
 The spirit gave the doctoral degree :
 And every member of a company }
 Was of his trade, and of the Bible, free.
 Plain truths enough for needful use they found ;
 But men would still be itching to expound : 410
 Each was ambitious of th' obscurest place,
 No measure ta'en from knowledge, all from grace.

Study and pains were now no more their care ;
 Texts were explain'd by fasting and by prayer :
 This was the fruit the private spirit brought ;
 Occasion'd by great zeal and little thought,
 While crowds unlearn'd, with rude devotion
 warm,

About the sacred viands buzz and swarm,
 The fly-blown text creates a crawling brood ;
 And turns to maggots what was meant for food. 420
 A thousand daily sects rise up, and die ;
 A thousand more the perish'd race supply :
 So all we make of Heaven's discover'd will,
 Is, not to have it, or to use it ill.
 The danger's much the same ; on several shelves
 If others wreck us, or we wreck ourselves.

What then remains, but, waiving each extreme,
 The tides of ignorance and pride to stem ?
 Neither so rich a treasure to forgo ;
 Nor proudly seek beyond our power to know : 430
 Faith is not built on disquisitions vain ;
 The things we must believe, are few and plain :
 But since men will believe more than they need ;
 And every man will make himself a creed,
 In doubtful questions 'tis the safest way
 To learn what unsuspected ancients say :
 For 'tis not likely we should higher soar
 In search of Heaven, than all the Church before :
 Nor can we be deceived, unless we see
 The Scripture and the Fathers disagree. 440
 If after all, they stand suspected still,
 (For no man's faith depends upon his will ;)
 'Tis some relief, that points not clearly known,
 Without much hazard may be let alone :
 And after hearing what our Church can say,
 If still our reason runs another way,
 That private reason 'tis more just to curb,
 Than by disputes the public peace disturb.

For points obscure are of small use to learn :
But common quiet is mankind's concern.

450

Thus have I made my own opinions clear ;
Yet neither praise expect, nor censure fear :
And this unpolish'd, rugged verse I chose,
As fittest for discourse, and nearest prose :
For while from sacred truth I do not swerve,
Tom Sternhold's, or Tom Sha—all's rhymes will serve.

TO THE LADY CASTLEMAINE, UPON HER ENCOURAGING HIS FIRST PLAY

AS seamen, shipwreck'd on some happy shore,
Discover wealth in lands unknown before ;
And, what their art had labour'd long in vain,
By their misfortunes happily obtain,
So my much-envied muse, by storms long toss'd,
Is thrown upon your hospitable coast,
And finds more favour by her ill success,
Than she could hope for by her happiness.
Once Cato's virtue did the gods oppose,
While they the victor, he the vanquish'd chose : 10
But you have done what Cato could not do,
To choose the vanquish'd, and restore him too.
Let others still triumph, and gain their cause
By their deserts, or by the world's applause ;
Let merit crowns, and justice laurels give,
But let me happy by your pity live.
True poets empty fame and praise despise ;
Fame is the trumpet, but your smile the prize :
You sit above, and see vain men below
Contend for what you only can bestow ; 20

But those great actions others do by chance,
Are, like your beauty, your inheritance :
So great a soul, such sweetness join'd in one,
Could only spring from noble Grandison.
You, like the stars, not by reflection bright,
Are born to your own heaven, and your own light ;
Like them are good, but from a nobler cause,
From your own knowledge, not from nature's laws.
Your power you never use, but for defence,
To guard your own, or other's innocence : 30
Your foes are such as they, not you, have made,
And virtue may repel, though not invade.
Such courage did the ancient heroes show,
Who, when they might prevent, would wait the blow ;
With such assurance as they meant to say,
We will o'ercome, but scorn the safest way.
What further fear of danger can there be ?
Beauty, which captives all things, sets me free.
Posterity will judge by my success,
I had the Grecian poet's happiness, 40
Who, waiving plots, found out a better way ;
Some God descended, and preserved the play.
When first the triumphs of your sex were sung
By those old poets, beauty was but young,
And few admired the native red and white,
Till poets dress'd them up, to charm the sight ;
So beauty took on trust, and did engage
For sums of praises till she came to age.
But this long-growing debt to poetry
You justly, madam, have discharged to me, 50
When your applause and favour did infuse
New life to my condemn'd and dying muse.

TO MY DEAR FRIEND, MR. CONGREVE,
ON HIS COMEDY CALLED 'THE
DOUBLE-DEALER'

WELL then, the promised hour is come at last ;
 The present age of wit obscures the past :
 Strong were our sires, and as they fought they writ,
 Conquering with force of arms, and dint of wit :
 Theirs was the giant race, before the flood ;
 And thus, when Charles return'd, our empire stood,
 Like Janus, he the stubborn soil manured,
 With rules of husbandry the rankness cured ;
 Tamed us to manners, when the stage was rude,
 And boisterous English wit with art indued. 10
 Our age was cultivated thus at length,
 But what we gain'd in skill we lost in strength.
 Our builders were with want of genius cursed ;
 The second temple was not like the first :
 Till you, the best Vitruvius, come at length ;
 Our beauties equal, but excel our strength.
 Firm Doric pillars found your solid base,
 The fair Corinthian crowns the higher space :
 Thus all below is strength, and all above is grace. }
 In easy dialogue is Fletcher's praise ; 20
 He moved the mind, but had not power to raise.
 Great Jonson did by strength of judgment please,
 Yet, doubling Fletcher's force, he wants his ease.
 In differing talents both adorn'd their age,
 One for the study, t' other for the stage.
 But both to Congreve justly shall submit.
 One match'd in judgment, both o'ermatched in wit.
 In him all beauties of this age we see,
 Etherege his courtship, Southern's purity,
 The satire, wit, and strength of manly Wycherley. }
 All this in blooming youth you have achieved ; 31
 Nor are your foil'd contemporaries grieved.

So much the sweetness of your manners move,
We cannot envy you, because we love.

Fabius might joy in Scipio, when he saw
A beardless consul made against the law,
And join his suffrage to the votes of Rome ;
Though he with Hannibal was overcome.

Thus old Romano bow'd to Raphael's fame,
And scholar to the youth he taught became.

40

Oh that your brows my laurel had sustain'd,
Well had I been deposed, if you had reigned :
The father had descended for the son,
For only you are lineal to the throne.

Thus, when the state one Edward did depose,
A greater Edward in his room arose :

But now, not I, but poetry is cursed ;
For Tom the second reigns like Tom the first.

But let 'em not mistake my patron's part,
Nor call his charity their own desert.

50

Yet this I prophesy ; thou shalt be seen,
(Though with some short parenthesis between),
High on the throne of wit ; and, seated there,
Not mine, that's little, but thy laurel wear.

Thy first attempt an early promise made ;
That early promise this has more than paid.

So bold, yet so judiciously you dare,
That your least praise is to be regular.

Time, place, and action, may with pains be wrought,
But genius must be born, and never can be taught. 60

This is your portion ; this your native store ;
Heaven, that but once was prodigal before,
To Shakspeare gave as much ; she could not give
him more. }

Maintain your post : that's all the fame you need ;
For 'tis impossible you should proceed.

Already I am worn with cares and age,
And just abandoning th' ungrateful stage :

Unprofitably kept at Heaven's expense,
I live a rent-charge on his providence :

But you, whom every muse and grace adorn, 70
 Whom I foresee to better fortune born,
 Be kind to my remains ; and oh, defend,
 Against your judgment, your departed friend !
 Let not th' insulting foe my fame pursue,
 But shade those laurels which descend to you :
 And take for tribute what these lines express :
 You merit more ; nor could my love do less.

TO MY HONOUR'D KINSMAN,
 JOHN DRIDEN,

OF CHESTERTON, IN THE COUNTY OF HUNTINGDON, ESQ.

HOW bless'd is he, who leads a country life,
 Unvex'd with anxious cares, and void of strife !
 Who studying peace, and shunning civil rage,
 Enjoy'd his youth, and now enjoys his age :
 All who deserve his love, he makes his own ;
 And, to be loved himself, needs only to be known.
 Just, good, and wise, contending neighbours come,
 From your award to wait their final doom ;
 And, foes before, return in friendship home.
 Without their cost, you terminate the cause ; 10
 And save th' expense of long litigious laws :
 Where suits are traversed ; and so little won,
 That he who conquers, is but last undone :
 Such are not your decrees ; but so design'd,
 The sanction leaves a lasting peace behind ;
 Like your own soul, serene ; a pattern of your mind. }

Promoting concord, and composing strife,
 Lord of yourself, uncumber'd with a wife ;
 Where, for a year, a month, perhaps a night,
 Long penitence succeeds a short delight : 20
 Minds are so hardly match'd, that ev'n the first,
 Though pair'd by Heaven, in Paradise, were cursed.

For man and woman, though in one they grow,
 Yet, first or last, return again to two.
 He to God's image, she to his was made ;
 So, farther from the fount, the stream at random
 stray'd.

How could he stand, when, put to double pain,
 He must a weaker than himself sustain !
 Each might have stood, perhaps ; but each alone ;
 Two wrestlers help to pull each other down. 30

Not that my verse would blemish all the fair ;
 But yet, if some be bad, 'tis wisdom to beware ;
 And better shun the bait, than struggle in the snare. }
 Thus have you shunn'd, and shun the married state,
 Trusting as little as you can to fate.

No porter guards the passage of your door ;
 T' admit the wealthy, and exclude the poor ;
 For God, who gave the riches, gave the heart
 To sanctify the whole, by giving part ;
 Heaven, who foresaw the will, the means has wrought
 And to the second son, a blessing brought ; 41
 The first-begotten had his father's share
 But you, like Jacob, are Rebecca's heir.

So may your stores, and fruitful fields increase ;
 And ever be you bless'd, who live to bless.
 As Ceres sow'd, where'er her chariot flew ;
 As Heaven in deserts rain'd the bread of dew,
 So free to many, to relations most,
 You feed with manna your own Israel host.

With crowds attended of your ancient race, 50
 You seek the champain sports, or sylvan chace :
 With well-breath'd beagles you surround the wood,
 Ev'n then, industrious of the common good :
 And often have you brought the wily fox
 To suffer for the firstlings of the flocks ;
 Chased even amid the folds ; and made to bleed,
 Like felons, where they did the murderous deed.
 This fiery game, your active youth maintain'd ;
 Not yet by years extinguished, though restrain'd :

You season still with sports your serious hours ; 60
 For age but tastes of pleasures, youth devours.
 The hare, in pastures or in plain is found,
 Emblem of human life, who runs the round ;
 And, after all his wandering ways are done,
 His circle fills, and ends where he begun,
 Just as the setting meets the rising sun. }

Thus princes ease their cares ; but happier he,
 Who seeks not pleasure through necessity,
 Than such as once on slippery thrones were placed ;
 And chasing, sigh to think themselves are chased. 70

So lived our sires, ere doctors learn'd to kill,
 And multiplied with theirs, the weekly bill :
 The first physicians by debauch were made :
 Excess began, and sloth sustains the trade.
 Pity the generous kind their cares bestow
 To search forbidden truths : (a sin to know :)
 To which, if human science could attain,
 The doom of death, pronounced by God, were vain.
 In vain the leech would interpose delay ;
 Fate fastens first, and vindicates the prey. 80
 What help from art's endeavours can we have !
 Guibbons but guesses, nor is sure to save :
 But Maurus sweeps whole parishes, and peoples
 every grave : }

And no more mercy to mankind will use,
 Than when he robb'd and murder'd Maro's muse.
 Would'st thou be soon despatch'd, and perish whole ?
 Trust Maurus with thy life, and M—lb—rn with thy
 soul.

By chace our long-lived fathers earn'd their food ;
 Toil strung the nerves, and purified the blood :
 But we their sons, a pamper'd race of men, 90
 Are dwindled down to threescore years and ten.
 Better to hunt in fields, for health unbought,
 Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught.
 The wise, for cure, on exercise depend ;
 God never made his work, for man to mend.

The tree of knowledge, once in Eden placed,
 Was easy found, but was forbid to taste :
 Oh, had our grandsire walk'd without his wife,
 He first had sought the better plant of life !
 Now, both are lost : yet, wandering in the dark, 100
 Physicians, for the tree, have found the bark :
 They, labouring for relief of human kind,
 With sharpen'd sight some remedies may find ; }
 Th' apothecary-train is wholly blind.
 From files, a random recipe they take,
 And many deaths of one prescription make.
 Garth, generous as his muse, prescribes and gives ;
 The shopman sells ; and by destruction lives :
 Ungrateful tribe ! who, like the viper's brood,
 From med'cine issuing, suck their mother's blood !
 Let these obey : and let the learn'd prescribe ; III
 That men may die, without a double bribe :
 Let them, but under their superiors, kill ;
 When doctors first have sign'd the bloody bill ;
 He 'scapes the best, who, nature to repair,
 Draws physic from the fields in draughts of vital
 air.

You hoard not health, for your own private use ;
 But on the public spend the rich produce.
 When, often urged, unwilling to be great,
 Your country calls you from your loved retreat, 120
 And sends to senates, charged with common care,
 Which none more shuns : and none can better bear :
 Where could they find another form'd so fit,
 To poise, with solid sense, a sprightly wit ?
 Were these both wanting (as they both abound),
 Where could so firm integrity be found ?
 Well born, and wealthy, wanting no support,
 You steer betwixt the country and the court :
 Nor gratify whate'er the great desire,
 Nor grudging give what public needs require. 130
 Part must be left, a fund when foes invade ;
 And part employ'd to roll the watery trade ;

Ev'n Canaan's happy land, when worn with toil,
Required a sabbath-year to mend the meagre
soil.

Good senators (and such are you) so give,
That kings may be supplied, the people thrive.
And he, when want requires, is truly wise,
Who slights not foreign aids, nor over-buys ;
But on our native strength, in time of need, relies. }
Munster was bought, we boast not the success ; 140
Who fights for gain, for greater, makes his peace.
Our foes, compell'd by need, have peace embraced :
The peace both parties want, is like to last :
Which, if secure, securely we may trade ;
Or, not secure, should never have been made.
Safe in ourselves, while on ourselves we stand,
The sea is ours, and that defends the land.
Be, then, the naval stores the nation's care,
New ships to build, and batter'd to repair.

Observe the war, in every annual course ; 150
What has been done, was done with British force.
Namur subdued, is England's palm alone ;
The rest besieged ; but we constrain'd the town :
We saw the event that follow'd our success ;
France, though pretending arms, pursued the
peace ;

Obliged, by one sole treaty, to restore
What twenty years of war had won before.
Enough for Europe has our Albion fought :
Let us enjoy the peace our blood has bought.
When once the Persian king was put to flight, 160
The weary Macedons refused to fight :
Themselves their own mortality confess'd ;
And left the son of Jove to quarrel for the rest.

Ev'n victors are by victories undone ;
Thus Hannibal, with foreign laurels won,
To Carthage was recall'd, too late to keep his own. }
While sore of battle, while our wounds are green,
Why should we tempt the doubtful die again ?

In wars renew'd, uncertain of success ;
Sure of a share, as umpires of the peace. 170

A patriot both the king and country serves ;
Prerogative, and privilege, preserves :
Of each, our laws the certain limit show ;
One must not ebb, nor t' other overflow :
Betwixt the prince and parliament we stand ;
The barriers of the state on either hand :
May neither overflow, for then they drown the land. }
When both are full, they feed our bless'd abode ;
Like those, that water'd once, the paradise of
God.

Some overpoise of sway, by turns, they share ; 180
In peace the people, and the prince in war :
Consuls of moderate power in calms were made ;
When the Gauls came, one sole dictator sway'd.

Patriots, in peace assert the people's right,
With noble stubbornness resisting might :
No lawless mandates from the court receive,
Nor lend by force, but in a body give.
Such was your generous grandsire : free to grant
In parliaments, that weigh'd their prince's want :
But so tenacious of the common cause, 190
As not to lend the king against his laws.
And, in a loathsome dungeon doom'd to lie,
In bonds retain'd his birthright liberty, }
And shamed oppression, till it set him free.

O true descendant of a patriot line,
Who, while thou shar'st their lustre, lend'st them
thine,

Vouchsafe this picture of thy soul to see ;
'Tis so far good, as it resembles thee :
The beauties to th' original I owe ;
Which when I miss, my own defects I show. 200
Nor think the kindred muses thy disgrace ;
A poet is not born in every race.
Two of a house few ages can afford ;
One to perform, another to record.

Praiseworthy actions are by thee embraced ;
 And 'tis my praise, to make thy praises last.
 For ev'n when death dissolves our human frame,
 The soul returns to heaven from whence it came ;
 Earth keeps the body, verse preserves the fame. }

TO THE MEMORY OF MR. OLDHAM

FAREWELL, too little, and too lately known,
 Whom I began to think, and call my own :
 For sure our souls were near allied, and thine
 Cast in the same poetic mould with mine.
 One common note on either lyre did strike,
 And knaves and fools we both abhorr'd alike.
 To the same goal did both our studies drive ;
 The last set out, the soonest did arrive.
 Thus Nisus fell upon the slippery place,
 Whilst his young friend perform'd, and won the race.
 Oh early ripe ! to thy abundant store II
 What could advancing age have added more ?
 It might (what nature never gives the young)
 Have taught the numbers of thy native tongue.
 But satire needs not those, and wit will shine
 Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line.
 A noble error, and but seldom made,
 When poets are by too much force betray'd.
 Thy generous fruits, though gather'd ere their prime,
 Still show'd a quickness ; and maturing time 20
 But mellows what we write, to the dull sweets of
 rhyme.

Once more, hail, and farewell ; farewell, thou young
 But ah ! too short, Marcellus of our tongue !
 Thy brows with ivy, and with laurels bound ;
 But fate and gloomy night encompass thee around.

PROLOGUE TO THE UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

TH^{O'} actors cannot much of learning boast,
 Of all who want it, we admire it most :
 We love the praises of a learned pit,
 As we remotely are allied to wit.
 We speak our poet's wit, and trade in ore,
 Like those who touch upon the golden shore :
 Betwixt our judges can distinction make,
 Discern how much, and why, our poems take ;
 Mark if the fools, or men of sense, rejoice ;
 Whether th' applause be only sound or voice. 10
 When our fop gallants, or our city folly,
 Clap over-loud, it makes us melancholy :
 We doubt that scene which does their wonder
 raise,

And, for their ignorance, condemn their praise.
 Judge then, if we who act, and they who write,
 Should not be proud of giving you delight.
 London likes grossly ; but this nicer pit
 Examines, fathoms all the depths of wit ;
 The ready finger lays on every blot ;
 Knows what should justly please, and what should
 not. 20

Nature herself lies open to your view ;
 You judge by her, what draught of her is true,
 Where outlines false, and colours seem too faint,
 Where bunglers daub, and where true poets paint.
 But, by the sacred genius of this place,
 By every Muse, by each domestic grace,
 Be kind to wit, which but endeavours well,
 And, where you judge, presumes not to excel.
 Our poets hither for adoption come,
 As nations sued to be made free of Rome. 30
 Not in the suffragating tribes to stand,
 But in your utmost, last, provincial band.

If his ambition may those hopes pursue,
 Who with religion loves your arts and you,
 Oxford to him a dearer name shall be,
 Than his own mother university.
 Thebes did his green unknowing youth engage ;
 He chooses Athens in his riper age.

PROLOGUE TO 'AURENG-ZEBE'

OUR author, by experience, finds it true,
 'Tis much more hard to please himself than you ;
 And out of no feign'd modesty, this day
 Damns his laborious trifle of a play :
 Not that it's worse than what before he writ ;
 But he has now another taste of wit ;
 And, to confess a truth, though out of time,
 Grows weary of his long-loved mistress, Rhyme.
 Passion's too fierce to be in fetters bound,
 And nature flies him like enchanted ground : 10
 What verse can do, he has perform'd in this,
 Which he presumes the most correct of his ;
 But spite of all his pride, a secret shame
 Invades his breast at Shakspeare's sacred name :
 Awed when he hears his god-like Romans rage,
 He, in a just despair, would quit the stage ;
 And to an age less polish'd, more unskill'd,
 Does, with disdain, the foremost honours yield.
 As with the greater dead he dares not strive,
 He would not match his verse with those who
 live : 20

Let him retire, betwixt two ages cast,
 The first of this, and hindmost of the last.
 A losing gamester, let him sneak away ;
 He bears no ready money from the play.
 The fate, which governs poets, thought it fit
 He should not raise his fortunes by his wit.

The clergy thrive, and the litigious bar ;
 Dull heroes fatten with the spoils of war ;
 All southern vices, Heaven be praised, are here ;
 But wit's a luxury you think too dear. 30
 When you to cultivate the plant are loth,
 'Tis a shrewd sign 'twas never of your growth ;
 And wit in northern climates will not blow,
 Except, like orange-trees, 'tis housed from snow.
 There needs no care to put a playhouse down,
 'Tis the most desert place of all the town :
 We and our neighbours, to speak proudly, are,
 Like monarchs, ruin'd with expensive war ;
 While, like wise English, unconcern'd you sit,
 And see us play the tragedy of wit. 40

EPILOGUE TO THE ' SECOND PART OF
 THE CONQUEST OF GRANADA '

THEY, who have best succeeded on the stage,
 Have still conform'd their genius to their age.
 Thus Jonson did mechanic humour show,
 When men were dull, and conversation low.
 Then comedy was faultless, but 'twas coarse :
 Cobb's tankard was a jest, and Otter's horse.
 And, as their comedy, their love was mean ;
 Except, by chance, in some one labour'd scene,
 Which must atone for an ill-written play.
 They rose, but at their height could seldom stay. 10
 Fame then was cheap, and the first comer sped ;
 And they have kept it since, by being dead.
 But, were they now to write, when critics weigh
 Each line, and every word, throughout a play,
 None of 'em, no, not Jonson in his height,
 Could pass, without allowing grains for weight.
 Think it not envy, that these truths are told ;
 Our poet's not malicious, though he's bold.

'Tis not to brand 'em, that their faults are shown
 But, by their errors, to excuse his own. 20
 If love and honour now are higher raised,
 'Tis not the poet, but the age is praised.
 Wit's now arrived to a more high degree ;
 Our native language more refined and free.
 Our ladies and our men now speak more wit
 In conversation, than those poets writ.
 Then, one of these is, consequently true ;
 That what this poet writes comes short of you,
 And imitates you ill (which most he fears),
 Or else his writing is not worse than theirs. 30
 Yet, though you judge (as sure the critics will)
 That some before him writ with greater skill,
 In this one praise he has their fame surpass'd,
 To please an age more gallant than the last.

AN ODE

TO THE PIOUS MEMORY OF THE ACCOMPLISHED YOUNG
LADY,

MRS. ANNE KILLIGREW,

EXCELLENT IN THE TWO SISTER ARTS OF POESY AND
PAINTING

THOU youngest virgin-daughter of the skies,
 Made in the last promotion of the bless'd ;
 Whose palms, new pluck'd from paradise,
 In spreading branches more sublimely rise,
 Rich with immortal green above the rest :
 Whether, adopted to some neighbouring star,
 Thou roll'st above us, in thy wandering race,
 Or, in procession fix'd and regular,
 Moved with the heaven's majestic pace ;
 Or, call'd to more superior bliss, 10
 Thou tread'st, with seraphims, the vast abyss :

Whatever happy region is thy place,
 Cease thy celestial song a little space ;
 (Thou wilt have time enough for hymns divine,
 Since heaven's eternal year is thine.)

Hear then a mortal Muse thy praise rehearse,
 In no ignoble verse ;

But such as thy own voice did practise here,
 When thy first-fruits of Poesy were given ;
 To make thyself a welcome inmate there :

20

While yet a young probationer,
 And candidate of heaven.

If by traduction came thy mind,
 Our wonder is the less to find
 A soul so charming from a stock so good ;
 Thy father was transfused into thy blood :
 So wert thou born into a tuneful strain,
 (An early, rich, and inexhausted vein.)

But if thy pre-existing soul
 Was form'd, at first, with myriads more,
 It did through all the mighty poets roll,
 Who Greek or Latin laurels wore,
 And was that Sappho last, which once it was before.
 If so ; then cease thy flight, O heaven-born mind !
 Thou hast no dross to purge from thy rich ore :

30

Nor can thy soul a fairer mansion find,
 Than was the beauteous frame she left behind :
 Return to fill or mend the choir of thy celestial kind.

May we presume to say, that, at thy birth,
 New joy was sprung in Heaven, as well as here on
 earth ?

40

For sure the milder planets did combine
 On thy auspicious horoscope to shine,
 And even the most malicious were in trine.
 Thy brother-angels at thy birth
 Strung each his lyre, and tuned it high,
 That all the people of the sky
 Might know a poetess was born on earth.

And then, if ever, mortal ears
 Had heard the music of the spheres !
 And if no clustering swarm of bees
 On thy sweet mouth distill'd their golden dew, 50
 'Twas that such vulgar miracles
 Heaven had not leisure to renew :
 For all thy blest fraternity of love
 Solemnized there thy birth, and kept thy holiday
 above.

O gracious God ! how far have we
 Profaned thy heavenly gift of poesy !
 Made prostitute and profligate the Muse,
 Debased to each obscene and impious use,
 Whose harmony was first ordained above 60
 For tongues of angels, and for hymns of love ?
 Oh wretched we ! why were we hurried down
 This lubrique and adulterate age,
 (Nay, added fat pollutions of our own)
 T' increase the streaming ordures of the stage ?
 What can we say t' excuse our second fall ?
 Let this thy vestal, Heaven, atone for all :
 Her Arethusian stream remains unsoil'd,
 Unmix'd with foreign filth, and undefiled ;
 Her wit was more than man, her innocence a child. 70

Art she had none, yet wanted none ;
 For Nature did that want supply :
 So rich in treasures of her own,
 She might our boasted stores defy
 Such noble vigour did her verse adorn,
 That it seem'd borrow'd, where 'twas only born.
 Her morals too were in her bosom bred,
 By great examples daily fed,
 What in the best of books, her father's life, she read.
 And to be read herself she need not fear ; 80
 Each test, and every night, her muse will bear,
 Though Epictetus with his lamp were there.

Even love (for love sometimes her muse express'd)
Was but a lambent flame which play'd about her
breast :

Light as the vapours of a morning dream,
So cold herself, whilst she such warmth express'd,
'Twas Cupid bathing in Diana's stream.

Born to the spacious empire of the Nine,
One would have thought, she should have been
content

To manage well that mighty government ; 90
But what can young ambitious souls confine ?

To the next realm she stretch'd her sway,
For Painture near adjoining lay,

A plenteous province, and alluring prey.

A Chamber of Dependencies was framed,
(As conquerors will never want pretence,

When arm'd, to justify th' offence)

And the whole fief, in right of poetry, she claim'd.

The country open lay without defence :

For poets frequent inroads there had made, 100

And perfectly could represent

The shape, the face, with every lineament,

And all the large domains which the Dumb Sister
sway'd.

All bow'd beneath her government,

Received in triumph wheresoe'er she went.

Her pencil drew, whate'er her soul design'd,

And oft the happy draught surpass'd the image in her
mind.

The sylvan scenes of herds and flocks,

And fruitful plains and barren rocks,

Of shallow brooks that flow'd so clear, 110

The bottom did the top appear ;

Of deeper too and ampler floods,

Which, as in mirrors, shew'd the woods ;

Of lofty trees, with sacred shades,

And perspectives of pleasant glades,

Where nymphs of brightest form appear,
 And shaggy satyrs standing near,
 Which them at once admire and fear.
 The ruins too of some majestic piece,
 Boasting the power of ancient Rome, or Greece, 120
 Whose statues, friezes, columns, broken lie,
 And, though defaced, the wonder of the eye ;
 What nature, art, bold fiction, e'er durst frame,
 Her forming hand gave feature to the name.
 So strange a concourse ne'er was seen before,
 But when the peopled ark the whole creation bore.

The scene then changed ; with bold erected look
 Our martial king the sight with reverence strook :
 For not content t' express his outward part,
 Her hand call'd out the image of his heart : 130
 His warlike mind, his soul devoid of fear,
 His high-designing thoughts were figured there,
 As when, by magic, ghosts are made appear.

Our phoenix-queen was portray'd, too, so bright,
 Beauty alone could beauty take so right :
 Her dress, her shape, her matchless grace,
 Were all observed, as well as heavenly face.
 With such a peerless majesty she stands,
 As in that day she took the crown from sacred
 hands :

Before a train of heroines was seen, 140
 In beauty foremost, as in rank, the Queen !
 Thus nothing to her genius was denied,
 But like a ball of fire the further thrown,
 Still with a greater blaze she shone,
 And her bright soul broke out on every side.
 What next she had design'd, Heaven only knows :
 To such immoderate growth her conquest rose,
 That fate alone its progress could oppose.

Now all those charms, that blooming grace,
 The well-proportion'd shape, and beauteous face, 150

Shall never more be seen by mortal eyes ;
In earth the much-lamented virgin lies !
Not wit, nor piety could fate prevent ;
Nor was the cruel destiny content
To finish all the murder at a blow,
To sweep at once her life, and beauty too ;
But, like a harden'd felon, took a pride
To work more mischievously slow,
And plunder'd first, and then destroy'd.
O double sacrilege on things divine, 160
To rob the relic, and deface the shrine !
But thus Orinda died :
Heaven, by the same disease, did both translate ;
As equal were their souls, so equal was their
fate.

Meantime, her warlike brother on the seas
His waving streamers to the winds displays,
And vows for his return, with vain devotion, pays.
Ah, generous youth, that wish forbear,
The winds too soon will waft thee here !
Slack all thy sails, and fear to come, 170
Alas, thou know'st not, thou art wreck'd at home !
No more shalt thou behold thy sister's face,
Thou hast already had her last embrace.
But look aloft, and if thou kenn'st from far,
Among the Pleiads, a new-kindled star,
If any sparkles than the rest more bright ;
'Tis she that shines in that propitious light.

When in mid-air the golden trump shall sound,
To raise the nations under ground ;
When in the valley of Jehoshaphat, 180
The judging God shall close the book of fate ;
And there the last assizes keep,
For those who wake, and those who sleep ;
When rattling bones together fly,
From the four corners of the sky ;

When sinews o'er the skeletons are spread,
 Those clothed with flesh, and life inspires the dead ;
 The sacred poets first shall hear the sound,
 And foremost from the tomb shall bound,
 For they are cover'd with the lightest ground ; 190
 And straight, with in-born vigour, on the wing,
 Like mounting larks, to the new morning sing.
 There thou, sweet saint, before the quire shalt go,
 As harbinger of heaven, the way to show,
 The way which thou so well hast learn'd below.

THE TWENTY-NINTH ODE OF THE THIRD BOOK OF HORACE

PARAPHRASED IN PINDARIC VERSE, AND INSCRIBED
 TO THE RIGHT HON. LAURENCE EARL OF ROCHESTER

I

DESCENDED of an ancient line,
 That long the Tuscan scepter sway'd,
 Make haste to meet the generous wine,
 Whose piercing is for thee delay'd :
 The rosie wreath is ready made ;
 And artful hands prepare
 The fragrant Syrian oil, that shall perfume thy hair.

II

When the wine sparkles from afar,
 And the well-natur'd friend cries, come away ;
 Make haste, and leave thy business and thy care ;
 No mortal interest can be worth thy stay. 11

III

Leave for a while thy costly country seat ;
 And, to be great indeed, forget

The nauseous pleasures of the great :
 Make haste and come :
 Come, and forsake thy cloying store ;
 Thy turret that surveys, from high,
 The smoke, and wealth, and noise of Rome ;
 And all the busie pageantry
 That wise men scorn, and fools adore ; 20
 Come, give thy soul a loose, and taste the pleasures of
 the poor.

IV

Sometimes 'tis grateful to the rich, to try
 A short vicissitude, and fit of poverty :
 A savoury dish, a homely treat,
 Where all is plain, where all is neat,
 Without the stately spacious room,
 The Persian carpet, or the Tyrian loom,
 Clear up the cloudy foreheads of the great.

V

The sun is in the Lion mounted high ;
 The Syrian star 30
 Barks from afar,
 And with his sultry breath infects the sky ;
 The ground below is parch'd, the heav'ns above us
 fry.
 The shepherd drives his fainting flock
 Beneath the covert of a rock
 And seeks refreshing rivulets nigh.
 The sylvans to their shades retire,
 Those very shades and streams new shades and
 streams require,
 And want a cooling breeze of wind to fan the raging
 fire.

VI

Thou, what befits the new Lord May'r, 40
 And what the city faction dare,

And what the Gallique arms will do,
 And what the quiverbearing foe,
 Art anxiously inquisitive to know :
 But God has, wisely, hid from human sight
 The dark decrees of human fate ;
 And sown their seeds in depth of night ;
 He laughs at all the giddy turns of state ;
 When mortals search too soon, and fear too late.

VII

Enjoy the present smiling hour ; 50
 And put it out of fortune's pow'r :
 The tide of bus'ness, like the running stream,
 Is sometimes high, and sometimes, low,
 A quiet ebb, or a tempestuous flow.
 And always in extreme.
 Now with a noiseless gentle course
 It keeps within the middle bed ;
 Anon it lifts aloft the head,
 And bears down all before it with impetuous force :
 And trunks of trees come rolling down, 60
 Sheep and their folds together drown ;
 Both house and homestead into seas are borne ;
 And rocks are from their old foundations torn,
 And woods made thin with winds, their scatter'd
 honours mourn.

VIII

Happy the man, and happy he alone,
 He, who can call to-day his own :
 He who, secure within, can say,
 To-morrow do thy worst, for I have liv'd to-day.
 Be fair, or foul, or rain, or shine,
 The joys I have possess, in spite of fate, are
 mine. 70
 Not Heav'n itself upon the past has power ;
 But what has been, has been, and I have had my hour.

IX

Fortune, that with malicious joy
 Does man, her slave oppress,
 Proud of her office to destroy,
 Is seldom pleased to bless :
 Still various, and unconstant still,
 But with an inclination to be ill.
 Promotes, degrades, delights in strife,
 And makes a lottery of life. 80
 I can enjoy her while she's kind ;
 But when she dances in the wind,
 And shakes her wings, and will not stay,
 I puff the prostitute away ;
 The little or the much she gave, is quietly resign'd :
 Content with poverty, my soul I arm ;
 And vertue, tho' in rags, will keep me warm.

X

What is't to me,
 Who never sail in her unfaithful sea,
 If storms arise, and clouds grow black ; 90
 If the mast split, and threaten wreck ?
 Then let the greedy merchant fear
 For his ill gotten gain ;
 And pray to Gods that will not hear,
 While the debating winds and billows bear
 His wealth into the main
 For me, secure from fortune's blows
 (Secure of what I cannot lose,)
 In my small pinnace I can sail,
 Contemning all the blust'ring roar ; 100
 And running with a merry gale,
 With friendly stars my safety seek
 Within some little winding creek ;
 And see the stars a shore.

A SONG FOR ST. CECILIA'S DAY

NOVEMBER 22 1687

FROM harmony, from heavenly harmony,
 This universal frame began :
 When nature underneath a heap
 Of jarring atoms lay,
 And could not heave her head,
 The tuneful voice was heard from high,
 Arise, ye more than dead.
 Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,
 In order to their stations leap,
 And Music's power obey.
 From harmony, from heavenly harmony
 This universal frame began :
 From harmony to harmony,
 Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
 The diapason closing full in Man.

10

What passion cannot Music raise and quell ?
 When Jubal struck the chorded shell,
 His listening brethren stood around,
 And, wondering, on their faces fell
 To worship that celestial sound.
 Less than a God they thought there could not dwell
 Within the hollow of that shell,
 That spoke so sweetly and so well.
 What passion cannot Music raise and quell ?

20

The trumpet's loud clangor
 Excites us to arms,
 With shrill notes of anger,
 And mortal alarms,
 The double double double beat
 Of the thundering drum
 Cries, hark ! the foes come ;
 Charge, charge, 'tis too late to retreat.

30

The soft complaining flute
In dying notes discovers
The woes of hopeless lovers,
Whose dirge is whisper'd by the warbling lute.

Sharp violins proclaim
Their jealous pangs, and desperation,
Fury, frantic indignation,
Depths of pains, and height of passion,
For the fair, disdainful dame.
But oh ! what art can teach,
What human voice can reach,
The sacred organ's praise ?
Notes inspiring holy love,
Notes that wing their heavenly ways
To mend the choirs above.

40

Orpheus could lead the savage race ;
And trees unrooted left their place,
Sequacious of the lyre :
But bright Cecilia raised the wonder higher :
When to her organ vocal breath was given,
An angel heard, and straight appear'd
Mistaking earth for heaven.

50

GRAND CHORUS

As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the bless'd above ;
So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And Music shall untune the sky.

60

ALEXANDER'S FEAST; OR, THE POWER OF MUSIC

AN ODE IN HONOUR OF ST. CECILIA'S DAY, 1697

'T WAS at the royal feast, for *the battle of Arcole* Persia won
By Philip's warlike son :

Aloft in awful state

The god-like hero sate

On his imperial throne :

His valiant peers were placed around, *flowers*
Their brows with roses and with myrtles bound ;

(So should desert in arms be crown'd :)

The lovely Thais, by his side,

Sate like a blooming Eastern bride

In flower of youth and beauty's pride.

Happy, happy, happy pair !

None but the brave,

None but the brave,

None but the brave deserves the fair.

10

CHORUS

Happy, happy, happy pair !

None but the brave,

None but the brave,

None but the brave deserves the fair.

Timotheus, placed on high

Amid the tuneful choir,

With flying fingers touch'd the lyre :

The trembling notes ascend the sky,

And heavenly joys inspire.

The song began from Jove ;

Who left his blissful seats above,

(Such is the power of mighty love.)

A dragon's fiery form belied the god :

Sublime on radiant spires he rode,

. 20

When he to fair Olympia press'd : 30
And while he sought her snowy breast :
Then round her slender waist he curl'd,
And stamp'd an image of himself, a sovereign of the
world.
The listening crowd admire the lofty sound,
A present deity ! they shout around :
A present deity ! the vaulted roofs rebound.
With ravish'd ears
The monarch hears,
Assumes the god,
Affects to nod, 40
And seems to shake the spheres.

CHORUS

With ravish'd ears
The monarch hears,
Assumes the god,
Affects to nod,
And seems to shake the spheres.

The praise of Bacchus then the sweet musician
sung,
Of Bacchus ever fair and ever young :
The jolly god in triumph comes ;
Sound the trumpets ; beat the drums : 50
Flush'd with a purple grace
He shows his honest face :
Now give the hautboys breath. He comes ! he comes !
Bacchus, ever fair and young,
Drinking joys did first ordain ;
Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure :
Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure,
Sweet is pleasure after pain. 60

CHORUS

Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
 Drinking is the soldier's pleasure :
 Rich the treasure,
 Sweet the pleasure,
 Sweet is pleasure after pain.

Soothed with the sound the king grew vain ;
 Fought all his battles o'er again ;
 And thrice he routed all his foes ; and thrice he slew
 the slain.

The master saw the madness rise ;
 His glowing cheeks, his ardent eyes ;
 And, while he heaven and earth defied,
 Changed his hand, and check'd his pride.

70

He chose a mournful muse

Soft pity to infuse :

He sung Darius, great and good,

By too severe a fate,

Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,

Fallen from his high estate,

And welt'ring in his blood ;

Deserted, at his utmost need,

By those his former bounty fed ;

On the bare earth exposed he lies,

With not a friend to close his eyes.

80

With downcast looks the joyless victor sate,

Revolving in his alter'd soul

The various turns of chance below ;

And, now and then, a sigh he stole ;

And tears began to flow.

CHORUS

Revolving in his alter'd soul

The various turns of chance below ;

And now and then, a sigh he stole ;

And tears began to flow.

90

The mighty master smiled, to see
 That love was in the next degree ;
 'Twas but a kindred-sound to move,
 For pity melts the mind to love.

Softly sweet, in Lydian measures,
 Soon he soothed his soul to pleasures.

War, he sung, is toil and trouble ;
 Honour, but an empty bubble ;

100

Never ending, still beginning,
 Fighting still, and still destroying :

If the world be worth thy winning,
 Think, oh think it worth enjoying :

Lovely Thais sits beside thee,

Take the good the gods provide thee.

The many rend the skies with loud applause ;
 So Love was crown'd, but Music won the cause.

The prince, unable to conceal his pain,

Gazed on the fair

110

Who caused his care,

And sigh'd and look'd, sigh'd and look'd,

Sigh'd and look'd, and sigh'd again :

At length, with love and wine at once oppress'd,
 The vanquish'd victor sunk upon her breast.

CHORUS

The prince, unable to conceal his pain,

Gazed on the fair

Who caused his care,

And sigh'd and look'd, sigh'd and look'd,

Sigh'd and look'd, and sigh'd again :

120

At length with love and wine at once oppress'd,
 The vanquish'd victor sunk upon her breast.

Now strike the golden lyre again :
 A louder yet, and yet a louder strain.

Break his bands of sleep asunder,

And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.

Hark, hark, the horrid sound,
 Has raised up his head :
 As awaked from the dead,
 And amazed, he stares around, 130
 Revenge ! revenge ! Timotheus cries,
 See the furies arise !
 See the snakes that they rear,
 How they hiss in their hair !
 And the sparkles that flash from their eyes !
 Behold a ghastly band,
 Each a torch in his hand !
 Those are Grecian ghosts, that in battle were slain,
 And unburied remain,
 Inglorious on the plain : 140
 Give the vengeance due
 To the valiant crew.
 Behold how they toss their torches on high,
 How they point to the Persian abodes,
 And glittering temples of their hostile gods.
 The princes applaud with a furious joy ;
 And the king seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy ;
 Thais led the way,
 To light him to his prey,
 And, like another Helen, fired another Troy ! 150

CHORUS

And the king seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy ;
 Thais led the way,
 To light him to his prey,
 And, like another Helen, fired another Troy !

Thus long ago,
 Ere heaving bellows learn'd to blow,
 While organs yet were mute,
 Timotheus, to his breathing flute,
 And sounding lyre,
 Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire. 160

At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame ;
The sweet enthusiast, from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds,
With nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.
Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown ;
He raised a mortal to the skies ;
She drew an angel down.

170

GRAND CHORUS

At last divine Cecilia came,
Inventress of the vocal frame ;
The sweet enthusiast, from her sacred store,
Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
And added length to solemn sounds,
With nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before.
Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown ;
He raised a mortal to the skies,
She drew an angel down.

180

200. 270.
LIBRARY, SER

SONGS AND LYRICS

THE LADY'S SONG

A CHOIR of bright beauties in spring did appear,
To choose a May-lady to govern the year ;
All the nymphs were in white, and the shepherds in
green,

The garland was given, and Phillis was queen :
But Phillis refused it, and sighing did say,
I'll not wear a garland while Pan is away.

While Pan and fair Syrinx are fled from our shore,
The Graces are banish'd, and Love is no more :
The soft god of pleasure, that warm'd our desires,
Has broken his bow, and extinguish'd his fires :
And vows that himself, and his mother, will mourn,
'Till Pan and fair Syrinx in triumph return.

Forbear your addresses, and court us no more,
For we will perform what the deity swore :
But if you dare think of deserving our charms,
Away with your shephooks, and take to your arms :
Then laurels and myrtles your brows shall adorn,
When Pan, and his son, and fair Syrinx, return.

A SONG TO A FAIR YOUNG LADY GOING OUT OF TOWN IN THE SPRING

ASK not the cause, why sullen Spring
So long delays her flowers to bear ;

Why warbling birds forget to sing,
And winter storms invert the year :
Chloris is gone, and fate provides
To make it Spring, where she resides.

Chloris is gone, the cruel fair ;
She cast not back a pitying eye :
But left her lover in despair,
To sigh, to languish, and to die :
Ah, how can those fair eyes endure
To give the wounds they will not cure !

Great god of love, why hast thou made
A face that can all hearts command,
That all religions can invade,
And change the laws of every land ?
Where thou hadst placed such power before
Thou shouldst have made her mercy more.

When Chloris to the temple comes,
Adoring crowds before her fall ;
She can restore the dead from tombs,
And every life but mine recall.
I only am by Love design'd
To be the victim for mankind.

GO TELL AMYNTA, GENTLE SWAIN

GO tell Amynta, gentle swain,
I would not die, nor dare complain :
Thy tuneful voice with numbers join,
Thy words will more prevail than mine.
To souls oppress'd, and dumb with grief,
The gods ordain this kind relief ;

That music should in sounds convey,
What dying lovers dare not say.

A sigh or tear, perhaps, she'll give,
But love on pity cannot live.
Tell her that hearts for hearts were made,
And love with love is only paid.
Tell her my pains so fast increase,
That soon they will be past redress ;
But ah ! the wretch, that speechless lies,
Attends but death to close his eyes.

AH, FADING JOY, HOW QUICKLY ART THOU PAST !

AH fading joy ! how quickly art thou past !
Yet we thy ruin haste.
As if the cares of human life were few,
We seek out new :
And follow fate, that does too fast pursue.

See, how on every bough the birds express,
In their sweet notes, their happiness.
They all enjoy, and nothing spare ;
But on their mother Nature lay their care :
Why then should man, the lord of all below,
Such troubles choose to know,
As none of all his subjects undergo ?

Hark, hark, the waters fall, fall, fall,
And with a murmuring sound
Dash, dash, upon the ground,
To gentle slumbers call.

I FEED A FLAME WITHIN, WHICH SO TORMENTS ME

I FEED a flame within, which so torments me,
That it both pains my heart, and yet contents me :
'Tis such a pleasing smart, and I so love it,
That I had rather die, than once remove it.

Yet he, for whom I grieve, shall never know it ;
My tongue does not betray, nor my eyes show it.
Not a sigh, nor a tear, my pain discloses,
But they fall silently, like dew on roses.

Thus, to prevent my love from being cruel,
My heart's the sacrifice, as 'tis the fuel :
And while I suffer this to give him quiet,
My faith rewards my love, though he deny it.

On his eyes will I gaze, and there delight me ;
Where I conceal my love no frown can fright me :
To be more happy, I dare not aspire ;
Nor can I fall more low, mounting no higher.

YOU CHARM'D ME NOT WITH THAT FAIR FACE

YOU charm'd me not with that fair face
Though it was all divine :
To be another's is the grace,
That makes me wish you mine.
The gods and fortunes take their part
Who like young monarchs fight ;
And boldly dare invade that heart
Which is another's right.

First mad with hope we undertake
To pull up every bar ;
But once possess'd we faintly make
A dull defensive war.
Now ev'ry friend is turned a foe
In hope to get our store ;
And passion makes us cowards grow
Which made us brave before.

AFTER THE PANGS OF A DESPERATE LOVER

AFTER the pangs of a desperate lover,
When day and night I have sigh'd all in vain,
Ah, what a pleasure it is to discover
In her eyes pity, who causes my pain !

When with unkindness our love at a stand is,
And both have punish'd ourselves with the pain,
Ah, what a pleasure the touch of her hand is !
Ah, what a pleasure to press it again !

WHEREVER I AM, AND WHATEVER I DO

WHEREVER I am, and whatever I do,
My Phillis is still in my mind ;
When angry, I mean not to Phillis to go,
My feet of themselves the way find :
Unknown to myself I am just at her door,
And, when I would rail, I can bring out no more,
Than, Phillis, too fair and unkind !

When Phillis I see my heart bounds in my breast,
And the love I would stifle is shown ;

But asleep, or awake, I am never at rest,
 When from my eyes Phillis is gone !
 Sometimes a sad dream does delude my sad mind :
 But, alas, when I wake and no Phillis I find,
 How I sigh to myself all alone !

Should a king be my rival in her I adore,
 He should offer his treasure in vain :
 Oh, let me alone to be happy and poor,
 And give me my Phillis again !
 Let Phillis be mine, and but ever be kind,
 I could to a desert with her be confined,
 And envy no monarch his reign.

Alas ! I discover too much of my love,
 And she too well knows her own power !
 She makes me each day a new martyrdom prove,
 And makes me grow jealous each hour :
 But let her each minute torment my poor mind,
 I had rather love Phillis both false and unkind,
 Than ever be freed from her power.

SONG OF THE SEA FIGHT

WHO ever saw a noble sight,
 That never view'd a brave sea fight !
 Hang up your bloody colours in the air,
 Up with your fights, and your nettings prepare ;
 Your merry mates cheer, with a lusty bold spright,
 Now each man his brindice, and then to the fight.
 St. George, St. George, we cry ;
 The shouting Turks reply.
 Oh now it begins, and the gun-room grows hot,
 Ply it with culverin and with small shot ; 10
 Hark, does it not thunder ? no, 'tis the guns roar,
 The neighbouring billows are turn'd into gore ;

Now each man must resolve to die,
For here the coward cannot fly.
Drums and trumpets toll the knell,
And culverins the passing bell.
Now, now they grapple, and now board amain ;
Blow up the hatches, they're off all again :
Give them a broadside, the dice run at all,
Down comes the mast and yard, and tacklings fall ;
She grows giddy now, like blind Fortune's wheel, 21
She sinks there, she sinks, she turns up her keel.
Who ever beheld so noble a sight,
As this so brave, so bloody sea-fight !

SONG OF VENUS

FAIREST isle, all isles excelling,
Seat of pleasure and of loves :
Venus here will choose her dwelling,
And forsake her Cyprian groves.

Cupid from his favourite nation,
Care and envy will remove ;
Jealousy, that poisons passion,
And despair, that dies for love.

Gentle murmurs, sweet complaining,
Sighs, that blow the fire of love ;
Soft repulses, kind disdaining,
Shall be all the pains you prove.

Every swain shall pay his duty,
Grateful every nymph shall prove ;
And as these excel in beauty,
Those shall be renown'd for love.

NO, NO, POOR SUFF'RING HEART, NO CHANGE ENDEAVOUR

NO, no, poor suff'ring heart, no change endeavour,
Choose to sustain the smart, rather than leave
her ;

My ravish'd eyes behold such charms about her,
I can die with her, but not live without her.
One tender sign of hers to see me languish,
Will more than pay the price of my past anguish :
Beware, O cruel Fair, how you smile on me,
'Twas a kind look of yours that has undone me.

ALL, ALL OF A PIECE THROUGHOUT

Momus. All, all of a piece throughout :
Pointing to Diana. Thy chase had a beast in view.
to *Mars.* Thy wars brought nothing
about ;
to *Venus.* Thy lovers were all untrue.

Janus. 'Tis well an old age is out.

Chronos. And time to begin a new.

Chorus of all. All, all of a piece throughout :
Thy chase had a beast in view ;
Thy wars brought nothing about ;
Thy lovers were all untrue.

'Tis well an old age is out,
And time to begin a new.

AN ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY

IT was that memorable day in the first summer of the late war, when our Navy engaged the Dutch ; a day wherein the two most mighty and best appointed fleets which any age had ever seen, disputed the command of the greater half of the globe, the commerce of nations, and the riches of the universe. While these vast floating bodies, on either side, moved against each other in parallel lines, and our countrymen, under the happy conduct of His Royal Highness, went breaking, by little and little, into the line of the enemies : the noise of the cannon from both navies reached our ears about the city, so that all men being alarmed with it, and in a dreadful suspense of the event which they knew was then deciding, every one went following the sound as his fancy led him ; and leaving the town almost empty, some took towards the Park, some cross the river, others down it : all seeking the noise in the depth of silence.

Amongst the rest it was the fortune of Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius and Neander to be in company together : three of them persons whom their wit and quality have made known to all the town ; and whom I have chosen to hide under these borrowed names, that they may not suffer by so ill a relation as I am going to make of their discourse.

Taking then a barge which a servant of Lisideius had provided for them, they made haste to shoot the bridge, and left behind them that great fall of waters, which hindered them from hearing what they desired ; after which having disengaged themselves from many

vessels which rode at anchor in the Thames, and almost blocked up the passage towards Greenwich, they ordered the watermen to let fall their oars more gently; and then, everyone favouring his own curiosity with a strict silence, it was not long ere they perceived the air break about them, like the noise of distant thunder, or of swallows in a chimney: those little undulations of sound, though almost vanishing before they reached them; yet still seeming to retain somewhat of their first horror, which they had betwixt the fleets. After they had attentively listened till such time as the sound, by little and little, went from them, Eugenius, lifting up his head, and taking notice of it, was the first who congratulated to the rest that happy omen of our nation's victory, adding, we had but this to desire, in confirmation of it, that we might hear no more of that noise, which was now leaving the English coast.

When the rest had concurred in the same opinion, Crites (a person of a sharp judgment, and somewhat too delicate a taste in wit, which the world have mistaken in him for ill nature) said, smiling, to us, that if the concernment of this battle had not been so exceeding great, he could scarce have wished the victory at the price he knew must pay for it, in being subject to the reading and hearing of so many ill verses, he was sure would be made upon it: adding, that no argument could 'scape some of those eternal rhymers, who watch a battle with more diligence than the ravens and birds of prey; and the worst of them surest to be first in upon the quarry, while the better able, either, out of modesty, writ not at all, or set that due value upon their poems, as to let them be often called for, and long expected.

'There are some of those impertinent people you speak of,' answered Lisideius, 'who, to my knowledge are already so provided either way, that they can produce not only a panegyric upon the victory, but,

if need be, a funeral elegy upon the duke, and, after they have crowned his valour with many laurels, at last deplore the odds under which he fell, concluding that his courage deserved a better destiny.'

All the company smiled at the conceit of Lisideius. But Crites, more eager than before, began to make particular exceptions against some writers, and said the public magistrate ought to send, betimes, to forbid them, and that it concerned the peace and quiet of all honest people, that ill poets should be as well silenced as seditious preachers.

'In my opinion,' replied Eugenius, 'you pursue your point too far: for, as to my own particular, I am so great a lover of poesy, that I could wish them all rewarded, who attempt to do well. At least, I would not have them worse used than Sylla the Dictator did one of their brethren heretofore:—*Quem in concione vidimus* (says Tully, speaking of him) *cum ei libellum malus poeta de populo subjecissit, quod epigramma in eum fecissit tantummodo alternis versibus longiusculis, statim ex iis rebus quas tunc vendebat jubere ei præmium tribui, sub ea conditione ne quid postea scriberet.*

'I could wish, with all my heart,' replied Crites, 'that many whom we know were as bountifully thanked, upon the same condition—that they would never trouble us again. For, amongst others, I have a mortal apprehension of two poets, whom this victory, with the help of both her wings, will never be able to escape.'

'Tis easy to guess whom you intend,' said Lisideius, 'and without naming them, I ask you if one of them does not perpetually pay us with clenches upon words, and a certain clownish kind of raillery? If, now and then, he does not offer at a *catachresis* or Clevelandism, wresting and torturing a word into another meaning? In fine, if he be not one of those whom the French would call *un mauvais bouffon*; one

that is so much a well-willer to the satire, that he spares no man : and though he cannot strike a blow to hurt any, yet ought to be punished for the malice of the action ; as our witches are justly hanged because they think themselves so, and suffer deservedly for believing they did mischief, because they meant it.'

' You have described him,' said Crites, ' so exactly, that I am afraid to come after you, with my other extremity of poetry. He is one of those, who, having had some advantage of education and converse, knows better than the other, what a poet should be ; but puts it into practice more unluckily than any man. His style and matter are everywhere alike : he is the most calm, peaceable writer you ever read : he never disquiets your passions with the least concernment ; but still leaves you in as even a temper as he found you. He is a very leveller in poetry ; he creeps along, with ten little words in every line, and helps out his numbers with ' for to ', and ' unto ', and all the pretty expletives he can find, till he drags them to the end of another line : while the sense is left, tired, halfway behind it : he doubly starves all his verses ; first, for want of thought, and then, of expression. His poetry neither has wit in it, nor seems to have it ; like him in Martial,

Pauper videri Cinna vult, et est pauper.

He affects plainness, to cover his want of imagination. When he writes the serious way, the highest flight of his fancy is some miserable *antithesis* or seeming contradiction : and in the comic he is still reaching at some thin conceit, the ghost of a jest, and that too flies before him, never to be caught. These swallows, which we see before us on the Thames, are the just resemblance of his wit. You may observe how near the water they stoop, how many proffers they make to dip, and yet how seldom they touch it ;

and when they do, 'tis but the surface ; they skim over it but to catch a gnat, and then mount in the air and leave it !'

'Well, gentlemen,' said Eugenius, 'you may speak your pleasure of these authors ; but though I and some few more about the town, may give you a peaceable hearing : yet, assure yourselves there are multitudes who would think you malicious, and them injured ; especially him whom you first described. He is the very Withers of the City : they have bought more editions of his works, than would serve to lay under all their pies at the Lord Mayor's Christmas. When his famous poem first came out, in the year 1660, I have seen them reading it in the midst of 'Change time ; nay, so vehement were they at it, that they lost their bargain by the candles' ends ! But what will you say, if he has been received among the great ones ? I can assure you, he is, this day, the envy of a great person, who is lord in the art of quibbling ; and who does not take it well, that any man should intrude so far into his province.'

'All I would wish,' replies Crites, 'is that they who love his writings, may still admire him and his fellow poet : *Qui Bavium non odit, &c.*, is curse sufficient.'

'And farther,' added Lisideius ; 'I believe there is no man who writes well, but would think himself very hardly dealt with, if their admirers should praise anything of his. *Nam quos contemnimus eorum quoque laudes contemnimus.*'

'There are so few who write well, in this age,' said Crites, 'that methinks any praises should be welcome. They neither rise to the dignity of the last age, nor to any of the Ancients : and we may cry out of the writers of this time, with more reason than Petronius of his, *Pace vestra liceat dixisse, primi omnium eloquentiam perdidistis* : "You have debauched the true old poetry so far, that Nature which is the soul of it is not in any of your writings !"'

‘If your quarrel,’ said Eugenius, ‘to those who now write, be grounded only upon your reverence to antiquity, there is no man more ready to adore those great Greeks and Romans than I am; but, on the other side, I cannot think so contemptibly of the age I live in, or so dishonourably of my own country as not to judge we equal the Ancients in most kinds of poesy, and in some surpass them; neither know I any reason why I may not be as zealous for the reputation of our age, as we find the Ancients themselves in reference to those who lived before them. For you hear Horace saying,

Indignor quidquam reprehendi, non quia crasse
Compositum, illepideve putetur, sed quia nuper.

And after,

Si meliora dies, ut vina, poemata reddit,
Scire velim pretium chartis quotus arroget annus?

But I see I am engaging in a wide dispute, where the arguments are not like to reach close on either side: for poesy is of so large extent, and so many both of the Ancients and Moderns have done well in all kinds of it, that, in citing one against the other, we shall take up more time this evening than each man’s occasions will allow him. Therefore, I would ask Crites to what part of poesy he would confine his arguments and whether he would defend the general cause of the Ancients against the Moderns, or oppose any age of the Moderns against this of ours?

Crites, a little while considering upon this demand, told Eugenius, he approved his propositions; and, if he pleased, he would limit their dispute to Dramatic Poesy: in which, he thought it not difficult to prove, either that the Ancients were superior to the Moderns, or the last age to this of ours.

Eugenius was somewhat surprised, when he heard Crites make choice of that subject. ‘For aught I see,’ said he, ‘I have undertaken a harder province

than I imagined ; for though I never judged the plays of the Greek and Roman poets comparable to ours, yet, on the other side, those we now see acted, come short of many which were written in the last age. But my comfort is, if we are overcome, it will be only by our own countrymen ; and if we yield to them in this one part of poesy, we more surpass them in all the other : for in the epic, or lyric way, it will be hard for them to show us one such amongst them, as we have many now living, or who lately were so : they can produce nothing so courtly writ, or which expresses so much the conversation of a gentleman, as Sir John Suckling ; nothing so even, sweet, and flowing, as Mr. Waller ; nothing so majestic, so correct, as Sir John Denham ; nothing so elevated, so copious, and full of spirit, as Mr. Cowley. As for the Italian, French, and Spanish plays, I can make it evident, that those who now write, surpass them ; and that the drama is wholly ours.

✓ All of them were thus far of Eugenius his opinion, that the sweetness of English verse was never understood or practised by our fathers ; even Crites himself did not much oppose it, and every one was willing to acknowledge how much our poesy is improved by the happiness of some writers yet living, who first taught us to mould our thoughts into easy and significant words ; to retrench the superfluities of expression ; and to make our rhyme so properly a part of the verse, that it should never mislead the sense, but itself be led and governed by it.

✓ Lisideius told him that it was necessary, before they proceeded further, to take a standing measure of their controversy. For how was it possible to be decided who writ the best plays, before we know what a play should be ? but this once agreed on by both parties, each might have recourse to it, either to prove his own advantages, or discover the failings of his adversary.

He had no sooner said this, but all desired the favour of him to give the definition of a play ; and they were the more importunate, because neither Aristotle, nor Horace, nor any other who writ of that subject, had ever done it.

Lisideius, after some modest denials, at last confessed he had a rude notion of it ; indeed, rather a description than a definition ; but which served to guide him in his private thoughts, when he was to make a judgment of what others writ : that he conceived a play ought to be ' a just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.'

This definition, though Crites raised a logical objection against it that it was only *a genere et fine*, and so not altogether perfect, was yet well received by the rest : and, after they had given order to the watermen to turn their barge, and row softly, that they might take the cool of the evening in their return, Crites, being desired by the company to begin, spoke on behalf of the Ancients, in this manner :—

' If confidence presage a victory, Eugenius, in his own opinion, has already triumphed over the Ancients. Nothing seems more easy to him than to overcome those whom it is our greatest praise to have imitated well : for we do not only build upon their foundation, but by their models. Dramatic Poesy had time enough, reckoning from Thespis, who first invented it, to Aristophanes, to be born, to grow up, and to flourish in maturity. It has been observed of arts and sciences, that in one and the same century they have arrived to a great perfection ; and no wonder, since every age has a kind of universal genius, which inclines those that live in it to some particular studies : the work then being pushed on by many hands, must, of necessity, go forward.

' Is it not evident, in these last hundred years

(when the study of philosophy has been the business of all the *virtuosi* in Christendom), that almost a new nature has been revealed to us? that more errors of the school have been detected, more useful experiments in philosophy have been made, more noble secrets in optics, medicine, anatomy, astronomy, discovered, than in all those credulous and doting ages, from Aristotle to us—so true it is, that nothing spreads more fast than science, when rightly and generally cultivated.

'Add to this the more than common emulation that was, in those times, of writing well: which, though it be found in all ages and all persons that pretend to the same reputation, yet poesy, being then in more esteem than now it is, had greater honours decreed to the professors of it, and consequently the rivalship was more high between them. They had judges ordained to decide their merit, and prizes to reward it: and historians have been diligent to record of Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Lycophron, and the rest of them, both who they were that vanquished in these wars of the theatre, and how often they were crowned; while the Asian kings and Grecian commonwealths scarce afforded them a nobler subject than the unmanly luxuries of a debauched Court, or giddy intrigues of a factious city:—*Alit aemulatio ingenia* (says Paterculus) *et nunc invidia, nunc admiratio incitationem accendit*: Emulation is the spur of wit, and sometimes envy, sometimes admiration quickens our endeavours.

But now, since the rewards of honour are taken away, that virtuous emulation is turned into direct malice; yet so slothful, that it contents itself to condemn and cry down others without attempting to do better: 'tis a reputation too unprofitable to take the necessary pains for it; yet wishing they had it is incitement enough to hinder others from it. And this, in short, Eugenius, is the reason why you have now so

few good poets and so many severe judges. Certainly, to imitate the Ancients well, much labour and long study is required : which pains, I have already shown, our poets would want encouragement to take, if yet they had ability to go through with it. Those Ancients have been faithful imitators and wise observers of that Nature which is so torn and ill-represented in our plays : they have handed down to us a perfect resemblance of her, which we, like ill copiers, neglecting to look on, have rendered monstrous and disfigured.

But that you may know how much you are indebted to those, your masters, and be ashamed to have so ill-requited them; I must remember you that all the rules by which we practise the drama at this day (either such as relate to the justness and symmetry of the plot, or the episodical ornaments, such as descriptions, narrations, and other beauties which are not essential to the play), were delivered to us from the observations that Aristotle made of those poets which either lived before him or were his contemporaries. We have added nothing of our own, except we have the confidence to say our wit is better ; which none boast of in our age but such as understand not theirs. Of that book which Aristotle has left us, *περὶ τῆς Ποιητικῆς*, Horace his *Art of Poetry* is an excellent comment, and, I believe, restores to us that Second Book of his concerning Comedy, which is wanting in him.

‘ Out of these two have been extracted the famous rules which the French call *Des trois Unités*, or “ The Three Unities ”, which ought to be observed in every regular play : namely, of time, place, and action.

‘ The unity of time they comprehend in twenty-four hours, the compass of a natural day, or as near it as can be contrived ; and the reason of it is obvious to every one—that the time of the feigned action or fable of the play should be proportioned, as near as

can be, to the duration of that time in which it is represented. Since, therefore, all plays are acted on the theatre in a space of time much within the compass of twenty-four hours, that play is to be thought the nearest imitation of Nature whose plot or action is confined within that time. And, by the same rule which concludes this general proportion of time, it follows that all the parts of it are to be equally subdivided; as, namely, that one act take not up the supposed time of half a day, which is out of proportion to the rest, since the other four are then to be straitened within the compass of the remaining half; for it is unnatural that one act which, being spoken or written, is not longer than the rest, should be supposed longer by the audience. 'Tis, therefore, the poet's duty to take care that no act should be imagined to exceed the time in which it is represented on the stage, and that the intervals and inequalities of time be supposed to fall out between the acts.

' This rule of time, how well it has been observed by the Ancients most of their plays will witness. You see them in their tragedies (wherein to follow this rule is certainly most difficult), from the very beginning of their plays, falling close into that part of the story which they intend for the action or principal object of it, leaving the former part to be delivered by narration; so that they set the audience, as it were, at the post where the race is to be concluded; and, saving them the tedious expectation of seeing the poet set out and ride the beginning of the course, you behold him not till he is in sight of the goal, and just upon you.

2. ' For the second unity, which is that of place, the Ancients meant by it that the scene ought to be continued through the play in the same place where it was laid in the beginning; for the stage on which it is represented being but one and the same place, it is

unnatural to conceive it many, and those far distant from one another. I will not deny but by the variation of painted scenes, the fancy which, in these cases, will contribute to its own deceit, may sometimes imagine it several places with some appearance of probability, yet it still carries the greater likelihood of truth if those places be supposed so near each other as in the same town or city, which may all be comprehended under the larger denomination of one place ; for a greater distance will bear no proportion to the shortness of time which is allotted in the acting to pass from one of them to another. For the observation of this, next to the Ancients, the French are to be most commended. They tie themselves so strictly to the unity of place, that you never see in any of their plays, a scene changed in the middle of an act. If the act begins in a garden, a street, or chamber, 'tis ended in the same place ; and, that you may know it to be the same, the stage is so supplied with persons, that it is never empty all the time : he that enters the second, has business with him who was on before ; and before the second quits the stage, a third appears, who has business with him. This, Corneille calls *La Liaison des Scènes*, the continuity or joining of the scenes ; and 'tis a good mark of a well-contrived play, when all the persons are known to each other, and every one of them has some affairs with all the rest.

' As for the third unity, which is that of action ; the Ancients meant no other by it than what the logicians do by their *finis* ; the end or scope of any action, that which is the first in intention, and last in execution. Now the poet is to aim at one great and complete action, to the carrying on of which all things in his play, even the very obstacles, are to be subservient : and the reason of this is as evident as any of the former. For two actions, equally laboured and driven on by the writer, would destroy the unity

of the poem ; it would be no longer one play, but two. Not but that there may be many actions in a play, as Ben Jonson has observed in his *Discoveries*, but they must be all subservient to the great one which our language happily expresses in the name of underplots : such as, in Terence's *Eunuch*, is the difference and reconciliation of Thais and Phædria, which is not the chief business of the play, but promotes the marriage of Chærea and Chremes's sister, principally intended by the poet. There ought to be but one action, says Corneille, that is, one complete action, which leaves the mind of the audience in a full repose ; but this cannot be brought to pass but by many other imperfect ones which conduce to it, and hold the audience in a delightful suspense of what will be.

' If by these rules (to omit many others drawn from the precepts and practice of the Ancients) we should judge our modern plays, 'tis probable that few of them would endure the trial. That which should be the business of a day, takes up, in some of them, an age ; instead of one action, they are the epitome of a man's life ; and for one spot of ground, which the stage should represent, we are sometimes in more countries than the map can show us. Rule
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' But if we will allow the Ancients to have contrived well, we must acknowledge them to have writ better, Questionless, we are deprived of a great stock of wit in the loss of Menander among the Greek poets, and of Cæcilius, Afranius, and Varius among the Romans : we may guess of Menander's excellency by the plays of Terence, who translated some of his, and yet wanted so much of him, that he was called by C. Cæsar, the Half-Menander ; and of Varius, by the testimonies of Horace, Martial, and Velleius Paterculus. 'Tis probable that these, could they be recovered, would decide the controversy : but so long as Aristophanes in the old comedy, and Plautus in

the new, are extant, while the tragedies of Euripides, Sophocles, and Seneca are to be had, I can never see one of those plays which are now written, but it increases my admiration of the Ancients. And yet I must acknowledge further, that to admire them as we ought, we should understand them better than we do. Doubtless many things appear flat to us, whose wit depended upon some custom or story, which never came to our knowledge; or perhaps upon some criticism in their language, which, being so long dead, and only remaining in their books, it is not possible they should make us know it perfectly. To read Macrobius explaining the propriety and elegance of many words in Virgil, which I had before passed over without consideration as common things, is enough to assure me that I ought to think the same of Terence; and that, in the purity of his style (which Tully so much valued that he ever carried his works about him) there is yet left in him great room for admiration, if we knew but where to place it.

‘ In the meantime, I must desire you to take notice that the greatest man of the last age, Ben Jonson, was willing to give place to them in all things. He was not only a professed imitator of Horace, but a learned plagiary of all the others; you track him everywhere in their snow. If Horace, Lucan, Petronius Arbiter, Seneca, and Juvenal had their own from him, there are few serious thoughts which are new in him; you will pardon me, therefore, if I presume he loved their fashion when he wore their clothes. But since I have otherwise a great veneration for him, and you, Eugenius, prefer him above all other poets, I will use no farther argument to you than his example: I will produce Father Ben to you, dressed in all the ornaments and colours of the Ancients. You will need no other guide to our party, if you follow him; and whether you consider the bad plays of our age, or regard the good ones of the last, both the best and

worst of the modern poets will equally instruct you to esteem the Ancients.'

2. Crites had no sooner left speaking, but Eugenius, who waited with some impatience for it, thus began :

'I have observed in your speech, that the former part of it is convincing as to what the Moderns have profited by the rules of the Ancients ; but, in the latter, you are careful to conceal how much you have excelled them. We own all the helps we have from them, and want neither veneration nor gratitude ; while we acknowledge that, to overcome them, we must make use of all the advantages we have received from them : but to these assistances we have joined our own industry : for, had we sate down with a dull imitation of them, we might then have lost somewhat of the old perfection, but never acquired any that was new. We draw not, therefore, after their lines, but those of Nature ; and having the life before us, besides the experience of all they knew, it is no wonder if we hit some airs and features which they have missed.

'I deny not what you urge of arts and sciences, that they have flourished in some ages more than others ; but your instance in philosophy makes for me ; for if natural causes be more known now than in the time of Aristotle, because more studied, it follows that poesy and other arts may, with the same pains, arrive still nearer to perfection : and, that granted, it will rest for you to prove that they wrought more perfect images of human life than we : which, seeing in your discourse, you have avoided to make good, it shall now be my task to show you some part of their defects, and some few excellences of the Moderns. And I think there is none amongst us can imagine I do it enviously, or with purpose to detract from them ; for what interest of fame, or profit, can the living lose by the reputation of the dead ? On the other side, it is a great truth which Velleius Paterculus affirms, *Audita visis libentius laudamus ; et*

præsentia invidia, præterita admiratione prosequimur ; et his nos obrui, illis instrui credimus, that praise or censure is certainly the most sincere which unbribed posterity shall give us.

‘ Be pleased, then, in the first place, to take notice that the Greek poesy, which Crites has affirmed to have arrived to perfection in the reign of the old comedy, was so far from it that the distinction of it into acts was not known to them ; or, if it were, it is yet so darkly delivered to us that we cannot make it out : all we know of it is from the singing of their chorus ; and that, too, is so uncertain, that in some of their plays we have reason to conjecture they sang more than five times.

‘ Aristotle, indeed, divides the integral parts of a play into four. First.—The *protasis*, or entrance, which gives light only to the characters of the persons, and proceeds very little into any part of the action. Secondly.—The *epitasis*, or working up of the plot where the play grows warmer ; the design or action of it is drawing on, and you see something promising that it will come to pass. Thirdly.—The *catastasis* or counter-turn, which destroys that expectation, embroils the action in new difficulties, and leaves you far distant from that hope in which it found you ; as you may have observed in a violent stream, resisted by a narrow passage ; it turns round to an eddy, and carries back the waters with more swiftness than it brought them on. Lastly.—The *catastrophe*, which the Grecians call λύσις the French, *Le dénouement*, and we, the *discovery* or *unravelling* of their plot. There you see all things settling again upon the first foundations ; and the obstacles which hindered the design or action of the play, once removed, it ends with that resemblance of truth or nature that the audience are satisfied with the conduct of it. Thus this great man delivered to us the image of a play ; and I must confess it is so lifelike, that, from thence,

much light has been derived to the forming it more perfectly into acts and scenes.

' But what poet first limited to five the number of the acts I know not : only we see it so firmly established in the time of Horace, that he gives it for a rule in comedy—*Neu brevior quinto, neu sit productior, actu*. So that you see the Grecians cannot be said to have consummated this art : writing rather by entrances than by acts, and having rather a general indigested notion of a play, than knowing how and where to bestow the particular graces of it.

' But since the Spaniards, at this day, allow but three acts, which they call *jornadas*, to a play, and the Italians, in many of theirs, follow them, when I condemn the Ancients, I declare it is not altogether because they have not five acts to every play, but because they have not confined themselves to one certain number. 'Tis building a house without a model ; and when they succeeded in such undertakings, they ought to have sacrificed to Fortune, not to the Muses. /

' Next, for the plot, which Aristotle called τὸ μῦθος, and often τῶν πραγμάτων σύνθεσις, and from him, the Romans, *Fabula* : it has already been judiciously observed by a late writer that in their tragedies, it was only some tale derived from Thebes or Troy ; or, at least, something that happened in those two ages ; which was worn so threadbare by the pens of all the epic poets, and even by tradition itself of the talkative *Greeklings*, as Ben Jonson calls them, that before it came upon the stage, it was already known to all the audience ; and the people, as soon as ever they heard the name of Œdipus, knew as well as the poet that he had killed his father by a mistake, and committed incest with his mother, before the play, and that they were now to hear of a great plague, an oracle, and the ghost of Laius ; so that they sat with a yawning kind of expectation, till he was to come

with his eyes pulled out, and speak a hundred or two of verses in a tragic tone, in complaint of his misfortunes. But one *Ædipus*, *Hercules*, or *Medea* had been tolerable. Poor people, they 'scaped not so good cheap: they had still the *chapon bouillé* set before them, till their appetites were cloyed with the same dish, and the novelty being gone, the pleasure vanished, so that one main end of Dramatic Poesy, in its definition, which was to cause delight, was of consequence destroyed.

' In their comedies, the Romans generally borrowed their plots from the Greek poets; and theirs was commonly a little girl stolen or wandered from her parents, brought back unknown to the same city, there got with child by some lewd young fellow, who, by the help of his servant, cheats his father; and when her time comes to cry *Juno Lucina, fer opem!* one or other sees a little box or cabinet, which was carried away with her, and so discovers her to her friends: if some god do not prevent it by coming down in a machine, and take the thanks of it to himself.

' By the plot you may guess much of the characters of the persons. An old father that would willingly, before he dies, see his son well married; his debauched son, kind in his nature to his wench, but miserably in want of money; a servant or slave, who has so much wit to strike in with him, and help to dupe his father; a braggadocio captain, a parasite, and a lady of pleasure.

' As for the poor honest maid, whom all the story is built upon, and who ought to be one of the principal actors in the play, she is commonly a mute in it: she has the breeding of the old Elizabeth way, for maids to be seen, and not to be heard; and it is enough you know she is willing to be married, when the fifth act requires it.

' These are plots built after the Italian mode of

houses—you see through them all at once: the characters are, indeed, imitations of nature, but so ~~narrow as if they had~~ imitated only an eye or an hand, and did not dare to venture on the lines of a face, or the proportion of a body.

‘But in how strait a compass soever they have bounded their plots and characters, we will pass it by, if they have regularly pursued them, and perfectly observed those three unities, of time, place, and action; the knowledge of which, you say, is derived to us from them. But, in the first place, give me leave to tell you that the unity of place, however it might be practised by them, was never any of their rules: we neither find it in Aristotle, Horace, or any who have written of it, till, in our age, the French poets first made it a precept of the stage.

‘The unity of time, even Terence himself, who was the best and most regular of them, has neglected: his *Heautontimoroumenos*, or Self Punisher, takes up, visibly, two days: therefore, says Scaliger, the two first acts, concluding the first day, were acted overnight; the last three on the ensuing day; and Euripides, in tying himself to one day, has committed an absurdity never to be forgiven him; for, in one of his tragedies, he has made Theseus go from Athens to Thebes, which was about forty English miles, under the walls of it to give battle, and appear victorious in the next act; and yet, from the time of his departure, to the return of the Nuntius, who gives the relation of his victory, *Æthra* and the Chorus have but thirty-six verses; that is, not for every mile a verse.

‘The like error is evident in Terence his *Eunuch*, when Laches, the old man, enters in a mistake the house of Thais; where, betwixt his exit and the entrance of Pythias, who comes to give an ample relation of the garboils he has raised within, Parmeno, who was left upon the stage, has not above five lines

to speak. *C'est bien employer un temps si court*, says the French poet, who furnished me with one of the observations; and almost all their tragedies will afford us examples of the like nature.

' 'Tis true, they have kept the continuity, or, as you called it, *Liaison des Scènes*, somewhat better: two do not perpetually come in together, talk, and go out together; and other two succeed them, and do the same throughout the act, which the English call by the name of single scenes; but the reason is, because they have seldom above two or three scenes, properly so called, in every act; for it is to be accounted a new scene, not only every time the stage is empty, but every person who enters, though to others, makes it so, because he introduces a new business. Now, the plots of their plays being narrow, and the persons few, one of their acts was written in a less compass than one of our well-wrought scenes, and yet they are often deficient even in this. To go no further than Terence: you find in the *Eunuch*, Antipho entering single in the midst of the third act, after Chremes and Pythias were gone off: in the same play, you have likewise Dorias beginning the fourth act alone; and after she has made a relation of what was done at the soldiers' entertainment (which, by the way, was very inartificial to do, because she was presumed to speak directly to the audience, and to acquaint them with what was necessary to be known, but yet should have been so contrived by the poet as to have been told by persons of the drama to one another, and so by them to have come to the knowledge of the people), she quits the stage, and Phædria enters next, alone likewise: he also gives you an account of himself, and of his returning from the country, in monologue; to which unnatural way of narration Terence is subject in all his plays. In his *Adelphi*, or Brothers, Syrus and Demea enter after the scene was broken by the departure of Sostrata, Geta, and Canthara; and,

indeed, you can scarce look into any of his comedies where you will not presently discover the same interruption.

‘ But as they have failed both in laying of their plots, and managing of them, swerving from the rules of their own art by misrepresenting nature to us, in which they have ill satisfied one intention of a play, which was delight ; so in the instructive part they have erred worse : instead of punishing vice and rewarding virtue, they have often shown a prosperous wickedness, and an unhappy piety : they have set before us a bloody image of revenge in *Medea*, and given her dragons to convey her safe from punishment ; a Priam and Astyanax murdered, and Cassandra ravished ; and lust and murder ending in the victory of him that acted them : in short, there is no indecorum in any of our modern plays, which, if I would excuse, I could not shadow with some authority from the Ancients.

‘ And one further note of them let me leave you : tragedies and comedies were not writ then, as they are now, promiscuously, by the same person ; but he who found his genius bending to the one, never attempted the other way. This is so plain, that I need not instance to you that Aristophanes, Plautus, Terence, never, any of them, writ a tragedy ; Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, and Seneca never meddled with comedy. The sock and buskin were not worn by the same poet. Having, then, so much care to excel in one kind, very little is to be pardoned them if they miscarried in it : and this would lead me to the consideration of their wit, had not Crites given me sufficient warning not to be too bold in my judgment of it ; because, the languages being dead, and many of the customs and little accidents on which it depended lost to us, we are not competent judges of it. But though I grant that, here and there, we may miss the application of a proverb or a custom, yet

a thing well said will be wit in all languages : and, though it may lose something in the translation, yet to him who reads it in the original, 'tis still the same : he has an idea of its excellency, though it cannot pass from his mind into any other expression or words than those in which he finds it.

' When Phædria, in the *Eunuch*, had a command from his mistress to be absent two days, and, encouraging himself to go through with it, said, *Tandem ego non illa caream, si opus sit, vel totum triduum?*—Parmeno, to mock the softness of his master, lifting up his hands and eyes, cries out, as it were in admiration, *Hui! universum triduum!* the elegance of which *universum*, though it cannot be rendered in our language, yet leaves an impression of the wit on our souls. But this happens seldom in him ; in Plautus oftener, who is infinitely too bold in his metaphors and coining words, out of which many times his wit is nothing : which, questionless, was one reason why Horace falls upon him so severely in those verses.

Sed proavi nostri Plautinos et numeros et
Laudavere sales, nimium patienter utrumque
Ne dicam stolide.

For Horace himself was cautious to obtrude a new word upon his readers, and makes custom and common use the best measure of receiving it into our writings :

Multa renascentur quæ nunc cecidere, cadentque
Quæ nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus
Quem penes arbitrium est, et jus, et norma loquendi.

The not observing of this rule is that which the world has blamed in our satirist, Cleveland : to express a thing hard and unnaturally is his new way of elocution. 'Tis true, no poet but may sometimes use a catachresis : Virgil does it—

Mistaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho—

in his eclogue of Pollio : and in his seventh *Æneid*—

— mirantur et undæ,
Miratur nemus, insuetum fulgentia longe
Scuta virum fluvio, pictasque innare carinas.

And Ovid once so modestly, that he asks leave to do it.

— Si verbo audacia detur
Haud metuam summi dixisse Palatia cœli,

calling the Court of Jupiter by the name of Augustus his palace ; though in another place he is more bold, where he says—*et longas visent Capitolia pompas*. But to do this always, and never be able to write a line without it, though it may be admired by some few pedants, will not pass upon those who know that wit is best conveyed to us in the most easy language ; and is most to be admired when a great thought comes dressed in words so commonly received that it is understood by the meanest apprehensions, as the best meat is the most easily digested : but we cannot read a verse of Cleveland's without making a face at it, as if every word were a pill to swallow : he gives us, many times, a hard nut to break our teeth, without a kernel for our pains. So that there is this difference between his satires and Doctor Donne's ; that the one gives us deep thoughts in common language, though rough cadence ; the other gives us common thoughts in abstruse words. 'Tis true, in some places, his wit is independent of his words, as in that of the *Rebel Scot*—

Had Cain been Scot, God would have changed his doom,
Not forced him wander, but confined him home.

Si sic omnia dixisset ! This is wit in all languages. 'Tis like mercury, never to be lost or killed :—and so that other,—

For beauty, like white powder, makes no noise,
And yet the silent hypocrite destroys.

You see, the last line is highly metaphorical, but it is so soft and gentle that it does not shock us as we read it.

‘ But, to return from whence I have digressed, to the consideration of the Ancients’ writing and their wit ; of which by this time you will grant us in some measure to be fit judges.

‘ Though I see many excellent thoughts in Seneca, yet he of them who had a genius most proper for the stage was Ovid ; he had a way of writing so fit to stir up a pleasing admiration and concernment, which are the objects of a tragedy, and to show the various movements of a soul combating betwixt two different passions, that, had he lived in our age (or in his own could have writ with our advantages), no man but must have yielded to him ; and therefore, I am confident the *Medea* is none of his : for, though I esteem it for the gravity and sentiousness of it which he himself concludes to be suitable to a tragedy,—*Omne genus scripti gravitate tragædia vincit*,—yet it moves not my soul enough to judge that he, who, in the epic way, wrote things so near the drama as the story of *Myrrha*, of *Caunus and Biblis*, and the rest should stir up no more concernment, where he most endeavoured it. The masterpiece of Seneca I hold to be that scene in the *Troades*, where Ulysses is seeking for Astyanax, to kill him : there you see the tenderness of a mother so represented in Andromache, that it raises compassion to a high degree in the reader, and bears the nearest resemblance, of anything in their tragedies, to the excellent scenes of passion in Shakespeare or in Fletcher.—For love scenes, you will find but few among them ; their tragic poets dealt not with that soft passion ; but with lust, cruelty, revenge, ambition, and those bloody actions that they produced, which were more capable of raising horror than compassion in an audience, leaving love untouched, whose gentleness would have tempered them ; which is the

most frequent of all the passions, and which, being the private concernment of every person, is soothed by viewing its own image in a public entertainment.

'Among their comedies, we find a scene or two of tenderness, and that where you would least expect it, in Plautus; but to speak generally, their lovers say little, when they see each other, but *anima mea, vita mea*, ζωή καὶ ψυχή, as the women in Juvenal's time used to cry out in the fury of their kindness: then, indeed, to speak sense were an offence. Any sudden gust of passion (as an ecstasy of love in an unexpected meeting), cannot better be expressed than in a word and a sigh, breaking one another. Nature is dumb on such occasions; and to make her speak would be to represent her unlike herself. But there are a thousand other concernments of lovers, as jealousies, complaints, contrivances, and the like; where, not to open their minds at large to each other, were to be wanting to their own love, and to the expectation of the audience, who watch the movements of their minds as much as the changes of their fortunes. For the imaging of the first is properly the work of a poet; the latter he borrows of the historian.'

Eugenius was proceeding in that part of his discourse, when Crites interrupted him.

'I see,' said he, 'Eugenius and I are never like to have this question decided betwixt us; for he maintains the Moderns have acquired a new perfection in writing, I can only grant, they have altered the mode of it. Homer describes his heroes, men of great appetites, lovers of beef broiled upon the coals, and good fellows: contrary to the practice of the French romances, whose heroes neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, for love. Virgil makes Æneas a bold avower of his own virtues:

Sum pius Æneas, fama super æthera notus;

which, in the civility of our poets is the character of a

fanfaron or Hector : for with us, the knight takes occasion to walk out, or sleep, to avoid the vanity of telling his own story, which the trusty squire is ever to perform for him.

‘ So in their love scenes, of which Eugenius spoke last, the Ancients were more hearty ; we more talkative : they writ love, as it was then the mode to make it.

‘ But I will grant thus much to Eugenius, that, perhaps, one of their poets, had he lived in our age,

Si foret hoc nostrum fato delapsus in ævum,

as Horace says of Lucilius, he had altered many things : not that they were not natural before, but that he might accommodate himself to the age he lived in. Yet in the meantime we are not to conclude anything rashly against those great men, but preserve to them the dignity of masters, and give that honour to their memories—*quos libitina sacravit*—part of which we expect may be paid to us in future times.’

3. This moderation of Crites, as it was pleasing to all the company, so it put an end to that dispute ; which, Eugenius, who seemed to have the better of the argument, would urge no further. But Lisideius, after he had acknowledged himself of Eugenius his opinion, concerning the Ancients, yet told him he had forbore, till his discourse were ended, to ask him why he preferred the English plays above those of other nations, and whether we ought not to submit our stage to the exactness of our next neighbours ?

‘ Though,’ said Eugenius, ‘ I am, at all times, ready to defend the honour of my country against the French, and to maintain we are as well able to vanquish them with our pens, as our ancestors have been with their swords ; yet, if you please,’ added he, looking upon Neander, ‘ I will commit this cause to my friend’s management ; his opinion of our plays is

the same with mine ; and besides, there is no reason that Crites and I, who have now left the stage, should re-enter so suddenly upon it, which is against the laws of comedy.'

'If the question had been stated,' replied Lisideius, 'who had writ best, the French or English, forty years ago, I should have been of your opinion, and adjudged the honour to our own nation ; but, since that time,' said he (turning towards Neander), 'we have been so long together bad Englishmen, that we had not leisure to be good poets. Beaumont, Fletcher, and Jonson (who were only capable of bringing us to that degree of perfection which we have), were just then leaving the world ; as if, in an age of so much horror, wit and those milder studies of humanity had no farther business among us. But the Muses, who ever follow peace, went to plant in another country : it was then that the great Cardinal de Richelieu began to take them into his protection ; and that, by his encouragement, Corneille and some other Frenchmen reformed their theatre, which before was as much below ours, as it now surpasses it, and the rest of Europe. But because Crites, in his discourse for the Ancients, has prevented me, by touching upon many rules of the stage which the Moderns have borrowed from them, I shall only, in short, demand of you whether you are not convinced that, of all nations, the French have best observed them ?

'In the unity of time, you find them so scrupulous, that it yet remains a dispute among their poets, whether the artificial day of twelve hours, more or less, be not meant by Aristotle, rather than the natural one of twenty-four ; and consequently, whether all plays ought not to be reduced into that compass. This I can testify, that in all their dramas writ within these last twenty years and upwards, I have not observed any that have extended the time to thirty hours. In the unity of place they are full as

scrupulous : for many of their critics limit it to that very spot of ground where the play is supposed to begin : none of them exceed the compass of the same town or city. The unity of action in all their plays is yet more conspicuous, for they do not burden them with underplots, as the English do ; which is the reason why many scenes of our tragi-comedies carry on a design that is nothing of kin to the main plot : and that we see two distinct webs in a play, like those in ill-wrought stuffs ; and two actions, that is, two plays carried on together, to the confounding of the audience ; who, before they are warm in their concernments for one part, are diverted to another, and by that means espouse the interest of neither.

‘ From hence likewise, it arises that one-half of our actors are not known to the other. They keep their distances, as if they were Montagues and Capulets, and seldom begin an acquaintance till the last scene of the fifth act, when they are all to meet on the stage. There is no theatre in the world has anything so absurd as the English tragi-comedy : ’tis a drama of our own invention, and the fashion of it is enough to proclaim it so : here a course of mirth, there another of sadness and passion ; a third of honour ; and fourth, a duel : thus in two hours and a half we run through all the fits of Bedlam. The French affords you as much variety on the same day, but they do it not so unseasonably, or *mal à propos* as we : our poets present you the play and the farce together ; and our stages still retain somewhat of the original civility of the Red Bull,

Atque ursum et pugiles media inter carmina poscunt.

‘ The end of tragedies or serious plays,’ says Aristotle, ‘ is to beget admiration, compassion, or concernment : but are not mirth and compassion things incompatible ? and is it not evident that the poet must of

necessity destroy the former by intermingling of the latter? that is, he must ruin the sole end and object of his tragedy, to introduce somewhat that is forced in, and is not of the body of it. Would you not think that physician mad who, having prescribed a purge, should immediately order you to take restringents upon it?

‘But to leave our plays and return to theirs. I have noted one great advantage they have had in the plotting of their tragedies; that is, they are always grounded upon some known history: according to that of Horace, *Ex noto fictum carmen sequar*: and in that they have so imitated the ancients, that they have surpassed them. For the Ancients, as was observed before, took for the foundation of their plays some poetical fiction, such as, under that consideration, could move but little concernment in the audience, because they already knew the event of it. But the Frenchman goes farther,

Atque ita mentitur, sic veris falsa remiscet,
Primo ne medium, medio ne discrepet imum.

He so interweaves truth with probable fiction, that he puts a pleasing fallacy upon us; mends the intrigues of fate, and dispenses with the severity of history, to reward that virtue, which has been rendered to us, there, unfortunate. Sometimes the story has left the success so doubtful, that the writer is free, by the privilege of a poet, to take that which of two or more relations will best suit with his design; as, for example, in the death of Cyrus, whom Justin and some others report to have perished in the Scythian War, but Xenophon affirms to have died in his bed of extreme old age. Nay more, when the event is past dispute, even then we are willing to be deceived; and the poet, if he contrives it with appearance of truth, has all the audience of his party, at least during the

time his play is acting : so naturally, we are kind to virtue, when our own interest is not in question, that we take it up, as the general concernment of mankind. On the other side, if you consider the historical plays of Shakespeare, they are rather so many chronicles of kings, or the business many times of thirty or forty years cramp't into a representation of two hours and a half ; which is not to imitate or paint Nature, but rather to draw her in miniature, to take her in little ; to look upon her, through the wrong end of a perspective, and receive her images not only much less, but infinitely more imperfect than the life : this, instead of making a play delightful, renders it ridiculous.

Quodcunque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.

For the spirit of man cannot be satisfied but with truth, or, at least, verisimilitude ; and a poem is to contain, if not τὰ ἔτυμα, yet ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, as one of the Greek poets has expressed it.

Another thing, in which the French differ from us and from the Spaniards, is that they do not embarrass or cumber themselves with too much plot : they only represent so much of a story as will constitute one whole and great action sufficient for a play : we, who undertake more, do but multiply adventures, which not being produced from one another, as effects from causes, but barely following, constitute many actions in the drama, and consequently make it many plays.

But by pursuing close one argument, which is not cloyed with many turns, the French have gained more liberty for verse, in which they write : they have leisure to dwell upon a subject which deserves it ; and to represent the passions (which we have acknowledged to be the poet's work) without being hurried from one thing to another, as we are in the plays of Calderon, which we have seen lately upon our theatres, under the name of Spanish plots. I have

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 taken notice but of one tragedy of ours, whose plot has that uniformity and unity of design in it, which I have commended in the French ; and that is *Rollo*, or rather under the name of *Rollo*, the story of *Bassianus and Geta*, in Herodian : there indeed the plot is neither large nor intricate, but just enough to fill the minds of the audience, not to cloy them. Be-
Combs
 sides, you see it is founded on the truth of history,—only the time of the action is not reducible to the strictness of the rules ; and you see in some places a little farce mingled, which is below the dignity of the other parts : and in this, all our poets are extremely peccant ; even Ben Jonson himself, in *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, has given us this olio of a play, this unnatural mixture of comedy and tragedy ; which to me sounds just as ridiculously as *The History of David, with the Merry Humours of Golias*. In *Sejanus* you may take notice of the scene between Livia and the physician, which is a pleasant satire upon the artificial helps of beauty : in *Catiline* you may see the Parliament of Women, the little envies of them to one another, and all that passes betwixt Curio and Fulvia : scenes admirable in their kind, but of an ill mingle with the rest.

But I return again to the French writers : who, as I have said, do not burden themselves too much with plot ; which has been reproached to them by an ingenious person of our nation as a fault : for he says, they commonly make but one person considerable in a play : they dwell upon him and his concernments, while the rest of the persons are only subservient to set him off. If he intends this by it,—that there is one person in the play who is of greater dignity than the rest, he must tax not only theirs, but those of the Ancients, and which he would be loath to do, the best of ours : for 'tis impossible but that one person must be more conspicuous in it than any other, and consequently the greatest share in the action must

devolve on him. We see it so in the management of all affairs : even in the most equal aristocracy, the balance cannot be so justly poised, but some one will be superior to the rest, either in parts, fortune, interest, or the consideration of some glorious exploit, which will reduce the greatest part of business into his hands.

‘ But if he would have us to imagine, that in exalting one character, the rest of them are neglected, and that all of them have not some share or other in the action of the play, I desire him to produce any of Corneille’s tragedies, wherein every person, like so many servants in a well-governed family, has not some employment ; and who is not necessary to the carrying on of the plot, or at least to your understanding it.

‘ There are indeed some protatic persons in the Ancients, whom they make use of in their plays, either to hear or give the relation ; but the French avoid this with great address, making their narrations only to, or by such, who are some way interested in the main design. And now I am speaking of relations, I cannot take a fitter opportunity to add this, in favour of the French, that they often use them with better judgment and more *à propos*, than the English do. Not that I commend narrations in general—but there are two sorts of them : One, of those things which are antecedent to the play, and are related to make the conduct of it more clear to us : but ’tis a fault to choose such subjects for the stage as will force us upon that rock, because we see they are seldom listened to by the audience, and that is many times the ruin of the play : for, being once let pass without attention, the audience can never recover themselves to understand the plot ; and, indeed, it is somewhat unreasonable that they should be put to so much trouble as that to comprehend what passes in their sight, they must have recourse to what was done perhaps ten or twenty years ago.

‘ But there is another sort of relation, that is, of things happening in the action of the play, and supposed to be done behind the scenes ; and this is, many times, both convenient and beautiful : for by it the French avoid the tumult, which we are subject to in England, by representing duels, battles, and the like, which renders our stage too like the theatres where they fight prizes. For what is more ridiculous than to represent an army with a drum and five men behind it, all which the hero of the other side is to drive in before him ? or to see a duel fought, and one slain with two or three thrusts of the foils, which we know are so blunted, that we might give a man an hour to kill another in good earnest with them ?

‘ I have observed that in all our tragedies the audience cannot forbear laughing, when the actors are to die : ’tis the most comic part of the whole play. All *passions* may be lively represented on the stage, if to the well writing of them, the actor supplies a good commanded voice, and limbs that move easily, and without stiffness ; but there are many *actions* which can never be imitated to a just height. Dying, especially, is a thing which none but a Roman gladiator could naturally perform upon the stage, when he did not imitate or represent, but naturally do it : and therefore it is better to omit the representation of it.

‘ The words of a good writer, which describe it lively, will make a deeper impression of belief in us than all the actor can persuade us to, when he seems to fall dead before us, as a poet in the description of a beautiful garden or a meadow will please our imagination more than the place itself can please our sight. When we see death represented, we are convinced it is but fiction ; but when we hear it related, our eyes, the strongest witnesses, are wanting, which might have undeceived us ; and we are all willing to favour the sleight, when the poet does not too grossly impose upon us. They therefore who imagine these relations

would make no concernment in the audience, are deceived, by confounding them with the other, which are of things antecedent to the play : those are made often in cold blood, as I may say, to the audience ; but these are warmed with our concernments, which are before awakened in the play. What the philosophers say of motion that when it is once begun it continues of itself, and will do so to eternity, without some stop be put to it, is clearly true on this occasion : the soul, being moved with the characters and fortunes of those imaginary persons, continues going of its own accord : and we are no more weary to hear what becomes of them, when they are not on the stage, than we are to listen to the news of an absent mistress.

‘ But it is objected, that if one part of the play may be related, then why not all ? I answer, some parts of the action are more fit to be represented, some to be related.

‘ Corneille says judiciously, that the poet is not obliged to expose to view all particular actions, which conduce to the principal : he ought to select such of them to be seen, which will appear with the greatest beauty, either by the magnificence of the show, or the vehemence of passions which they produce, or some other charm which they have in them, and let the rest arrive to the audience by narration. ‘Tis a great mistake in us, to believe the French present no part of the action upon the stage : every alteration, or crossing of a design, every new sprung passion and turn of it, is a part of the action, and much the noblest, except we conceive nothing to be action till they come to blows ; as if the painting of the hero’s mind were not more properly the poet’s work than the strength of his body. Nor does this anything contradict the opinion of Horace, where he tells us—

*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.*

For he says, immediately after,

——— Non tamen intus
Digna geri promes in scenam ; *multaque tolles*
Ex oculis, quæ mox narret facundia præsens.

Among which *many* he recounts some ;

Nec pueros coram populo Medea trucidet,
Aut in avem Progne mutetur, Cadmus in anguem, &c.

that is, those actions, which, by reason of their cruelty, will cause aversion in us, or, by reason of their impossibility, unbelief, ought either wholly to be avoided by a poet, or only delivered by narration. To which we may have leave to add, such as, to avoid tumult (as was before hinted), or to reduce the plot into a more reasonable compass of time, or for defect of beauty in them, are rather to be related than presented to the eye. Examples of all these kinds are frequent ; not only among all the Ancients, but in the best received of our English poets.

‘ We find Ben Jonson using them in his *Magnetic Lady*, where one comes out from dinner, and relates the quarrels and disorders of it, to save the undecent appearance of them on the stage, and to abbreviate the story ; and this in express imitation of Terence, who had done the same before him, in his *Eunuch*, where Pythias makes the like relation of what had happened within at the soldiers’ entertainment. The relations likewise of Sejanus’s death and the prodigies before it, are remarkable ; the one of which was hid from sight, to avoid the horror and tumult of the representation ; the other, to shun the introducing of things impossible to be believed. In that excellent play, *The King and no King*, Fletcher goes yet farther : for the whole unravelling of the plot is done by narration in the fifth act, after the manner of the Ancients ; and it moves great concernment in the

audience, though it be only a relation of what was done many years before the play.

‘ I could multiply other instances, but these are sufficient to prove that there is no error in choosing a subject which requires this sort of narration ; in the ill-managing of them, there may.

‘ But I find I have been too long in this discourse, since the French have many other excellencies, not common to us : as that you never see any of their plays end with a conversion, or simple change of will, which is the ordinary way our poets use to end theirs. It shows little art in the conclusion of a dramatic poem, when they who have hindered the felicity during the four acts, desist from it in the fifth, without some powerful cause to take them off ; and though I deny not but such reasons may be found, yet it is a path that is cautiously to be trod, and the poet is to be sure he convinces the audience that the motive is strong enough. As for example, the conversion of the Usurer in *The Scornful Lady* seems to me a little forced : for, being a usurer, which implies a lover of money to the highest degree of covetousness—and such the poet has represented him—the account he gives for the sudden change is, that he has been duped by the wild young fellow ; which in reason might render him more wary another time, and make him punish himself with harder fare and coarser clothes, to get it up again : but that he should look upon it as a judgment, and so repent, we may expect to hear of in a sermon, but I should never endure it in a play.

‘ I pass by this : neither will I insist upon the care they take, that no person, after his first entrance, shall ever appear, but the business which brings upon the stage shall be evident : which rule, if observed, must needs render all the events of the play more natural : for there you see the probability of every accident in the cause that produced it ; and that which appears

chance in the play, will seem so reasonable to you, that you will there find it almost necessary ; so that in the exits of their actors, you have a clear account of their purpose and design in the next entrance ; (though, if the scene be well wrought, the event will commonly deceive you :) for there is nothing so absurd, says Corneille, as for an actor to leave the stage, only because he has no more to say.

‘ I should now speak of the beauty of their rhyme, and the just reason I have to prefer that way of writing, in tragedies, before ours, in blank verse : but because it is partly received by us, and therefore not altogether peculiar to them, I will say no more of it, in relation to their plays. For our own, I doubt not but it will exceedingly beautify them ; and I can see but one reason why it should not generally obtain, that is, because our poets write so ill in it. This, indeed, may prove a more prevailing argument than all others which are used to destroy it, and, therefore, I am only troubled when great and judicious poets, and those who are acknowledged such, have writ or spoke against it : as for others, they are to be answered by that one sentence of an ancient author : *Sed ut primo ad consequendos eos quos priores ducimus accendimur, ita ubi aut præteriri, aut æquari eos posse desperavimus, studium cum spe senescit ; quod, scilicet, assequi non potest, sequi desinit ; . . . præteritoque eo in quo eminere non possumus, aliquid in quo nitamur conquirimus.*’

U. Licideius concluded in this manner ; and Neander, after a little pause, thus answered him :

‘ I shall grant Licideius, without much dispute, a great part of what he has urged against us : for I acknowledge the French contrive their plots more regularly, and observe the laws of comedy and decorum of the stage (to speak generally), with more exactness than the English. Farther, I deny not but he has taxed us justly in some irregularities of ours,

which he has mentioned ; yet, after all, I am of opinion, that neither our faults, nor their virtues are considerable enough to place them above us. *gump*

‘ For the lively imitation of Nature being the definition of a play, those which best fulfil that law, ought to be esteemed superior to the others. ’Tis true those beauties of the French poesy are such as will raise perfection higher where it is, but are not sufficient to give it where it is not : they are, indeed, the beauties of a statue, but not of a man, because not animated with the soul of poesy, which is imitation of humour and passions ; and this, Lisideius himself, or any other, however biassed to their party, cannot but acknowledge, if he will either compare the humours of our comedies, or the characters of our serious plays, with theirs. He that will look upon theirs which have been written till these last ten years or thereabouts, will find it a hard matter to pick out two or three passable humours amongst them. Corneille himself, their arch poet, what has he produced, except *The Liar*, and you know how it was cried up in France ? But when it came upon the English stage, though well translated, and that part of Dorant acted to so much advantage by Mr. Hart, as I am confident it never received in its own country, the most favourable to it would not put it in competition with many of Fletcher’s or Ben Jonson’s. In the rest of Corneille’s comedies you have little humour. He tells you, himself, his way is, first to show two lovers in good intelligence with each other ; in the working up of the play, to embroil them by some mistake, and in the latter end, to clear it up.

‘ But, of late years, Molière, the younger Corneille, Quinault, and some others, have been imitating, afar off, the quick turns and graces of the English stage. They have mixed their serious plays with mirth, like our tragi-comedies, since the death of Cardinal Richelieu, which Lisideius and many others not

observing, have commended that in them for a virtue which they themselves no longer practise. Most of their new plays are, like some of ours, derived from the Spanish novels. There is scarce one of them without a veil, and a trusty Diego, who drolls, much after the rate of *The Adventures*. But their humours, if I may grace them with that name, are so thin-sown, that never above one of them comes up in any play. I dare take upon me to find more variety of them in some one play of Ben Jonson's than in all theirs together; as he who has seen *The Alchemist*, *The Silent Woman*, or *Bartholomew Fair* cannot but acknowledge with me.

'I grant the French have performed what was possible on the ground-work of the Spanish plays; what was pleasant before, they have made regular; but there is not above one good play to be writ upon all those plots; they are too much alike to please often, which we need not the experience of our own stage to justify. As for their new way of mingling mirth with serious plot, I do not, with Lisideius, condemn the thing, though I cannot approve their manner of doing it. He tells us we cannot so speedily recollect ourselves, after a scene of great passion and concernment, as to pass to another of mirth and humour, and to enjoy it with any relish; but why should he imagine the soul of man more heavy than his senses? Does not the eye pass from an unpleasant object to a pleasant in a much shorter time than is required to this? And does not the unpleasantness of the first commend the beauty of the latter? The old rule of logic might have convinced him that contraries when placed near set off each other. A continued gravity keeps the spirit too much bent; we must refresh it sometimes, as we bait upon a journey that we may go on with greater ease. A scene of mirth mixed with tragedy has the same effect upon us which our music has betwixt the acts; which we find a relief to us

from the best plots and language of the stage if the discourses have been long. I must, therefore, have stronger arguments ere I am convinced that compassion and mirth in the same subject destroy each other ; and, in the meantime, cannot but conclude to the honour of our nation that we have invented, increased, and perfected a more pleasant way of writing for the stage than was ever known to the Ancients or Moderns of any nation, which is tragic-comedy.

‘ And this leads me to wonder why Lisideius and many others should cry up the barrenness of the French plots above the variety and copiousness of the English.

‘ Their plots are single : they carry on one design, which is pushed forward by all the actors, every scene in the play contributing and moving towards it. Our plays, besides the main design, have underplots or by-concernments of less considerable persons and intrigues, which are carried on with the motion of the main plot ; as they say the orb of the fixed stars and those of the planets, though they have motions of their own, are whirled about by the motion of the *primum mobile* in which they are contained. That similitude expresses much of the English stage ; for if contrary motions may be found in Nature to agree, if a planet can go east and west at the same time (one way by virtue of his own motion, the other by the force of the first mover), it will not be difficult to imagine how the underplot, which is only different, not contrary to the great design, may naturally be conducted along with it.

‘ Eugenius has already shown us, from the confession of the French poets, that the unity of action is sufficiently preserved if all the imperfect actions of the play are conducing to the main design ; but when those petty intrigues of a play are so ill ordered that they have no coherence with the other, I must grant

Lisideius has reason to tax that want of due connection. For co-ordination in a play is as dangerous and unnatural as in a state. In the meantime he must acknowledge our variety, if well ordered, will afford a greater pleasure to the audience.

‘As for his other argument, that by pursuing one single theme they gain an advantage to express and work up the passions, I wish any example he could bring from them would make it good: for I confess their verses are to me the coldest I have ever read. Neither, indeed, is it possible for them in the way they take so to express passion as that the effects of it should appear in the concernment of an audience, their speeches being so many declamations which tire us with the length; so that, instead of persuading us to grieve for their imaginary heroes, we are concerned for our own trouble, as we are in the tedious visits of bad company; we are in pain till they are gone. When the French stage came to be reformed by Cardinal Richelieu, those long harangues were introduced to comply with the gravity of a Churchman. Look upon the *Cinna* and the *Pompey*; they are not so properly to be called plays as long discourses of reason of State; and *Polieucte*, in matters of religion, is as solemn as the long stops upon our organs. Since that time it has grown into a custom, and their actors speak by the hour-glass, as our parsons; nay, they account it the grace of their parts, and think themselves disparaged by the poet if they may not twice or thrice in a play entertain the audience with a speech of a hundred or two hundred lines.

‘I deny not but this may suit well enough with the French; for as we, who are a more sullen people, come to be diverted at our plays, they, who are of an airy and gay temper, come thither to make themselves more serious; and this I conceive to be one reason why comedies are more pleasing to us, and tragedies to them. But, to speak generally; it cannot be

denied that short speeches and replies are more apt to move the passions and beget concernment in us than the other ; for it is unnatural for any one in a gust of passion to speak long together, or for another, in the same condition, to suffer him without interruption. Grief and passion are like floods raised in little brooks by a sudden rain : they are quickly up, and if the concernment be poured unexpectedly in upon us it overflows us ; but a long, sober shower gives them leisure to run out as they came in, without troubling the ordinary current. As for comedy, repartee is one of its chiefest graces. The greatest pleasure of the audience is a chase of wit, kept up on both sides, and swiftly managed. And this our forefathers, if not we, have had in Fletcher's plays to a much higher degree of perfection than the French poets can arrive at.

' There is another part of Lisideius his discourse, in which he has rather excused our neighbours than commended them ; that is for aiming only to make one person considerable in their plays. 'Tis very true what he has urged, that one character in all plays, even without the poet's care, will have the advantage of all the others ; and that the design of the whole drama will chiefly depend on it. But this hinders not that there may be more shining characters in the play ; many persons of a second magnitude, nay, some so very near, so almost equal to the first, that greatness may be opposed to greatness, and all the persons be made considerable, not only by their quality, but their action. 'Tis evident that the more the persons are, the greater will be the variety of the plot. If, then, the parts are managed so regularly that the beauty of the whole be kept entire, and that the variety become not a perplexed and confused mass of accidents, you will find it infinitely pleasing to be led in a labyrinth of design, where you see some of your way before you, yet discern not the end, till you arrive at

it. And that all this is practicable, I can produce, for examples, many of our English plays; as *The Maid's Tragedy*, *The Alchemist*, *The Silent Woman*; I was going to have named *The Fox*, but that the unity of design seems not exactly observed in it: for there appear two actions in the play, the first naturally ending with the fourth act; the second forced from it in the fifth; which yet is the less to be condemned in him because the disguise of Volpone, though it suited not with his character as a crafty or covetous person, agreed well enough with that of a voluptuary, and by it the poet gained the end he aimed at, the punishment of vice and reward of virtue, which that disguise produced. So that to judge equally of it, it was an excellent fifth act, but not so naturally proceeding from the former.

'But to leave this, and to pass to the latter part of Lisideius his discourse, which concerns relations; I must acknowledge with him that the French have reason to hide that part of the action which would occasion too much tumult upon the stage, and choose rather to have it made known by narration to the audience.

'Farther, I think it very convenient for the reasons he has given that all incredible actions were removed; but whether custom has so insinuated itself into our countrymen, or Nature has so formed them to fierceness I know not, but they will scarcely suffer combats other objects of horror to be taken from them. And, indeed, the indecency of tumults is all which can be objected against fighting. For why may not our imagination as well suffer itself to be deluded with the probability of it as with any other thing in the play? For my part, I can with as great ease persuade myself that the blows which are struck are given in good earnest, as I can that they who strike them are kings or princes, or those persons which they represent.

'For objects of incredibility,—I would be satisfied

from Lisideius whether we have any so removed from all appearance of truth as are those of Corneille's *Andromède* ; a play which has been frequented the most of any he has writ. If the Perseus, or the son of an heathen god, the Pegasus, and the Monster, were not capable to choke a strong belief, let him blame any representation of ours hereafter. Those, indeed, were objects of delight ; yet the reason is the same as to the probability ; for he makes it not a ballet or a masque, but a play, which is to resemble truth.

‘ But for death, that it ought not to be represented I have, besides the arguments alleged by Lisideius, the authority of Ben Jonson, who has foreborne it in his tragedies, for both the death of Sejanus and of Catiline are related ; though, in the latter, I cannot but observe one irregularity of that great poet ; he has removed the scene in the same act from Rome to Catiline's army, and from thence again to Rome, and besides, has allowed a very inconsiderable time after Catiline's speech for the striking of the battle and the return of Petreius, who is to relate the event of it to the Senate ; which I should not animadvert on him, who was otherwise a painful observer of τὸ πρέπον or the decorum of the stage, if he had not used extreme severity in his judgment upon the incomparable Shakespeare for the same fault.

‘ To conclude on this subject of relations, if we are to be blamed for showing too much of the action, the French are as faulty for discovering too little of it : a mean betwixt both should be observed by every judicious writer, so as the audience may neither be left unsatisfied by not seeing what is beautiful, or shocked by beholding what is either incredible or undecent.

‘ I hope I have already proved in this discourse that though we are not altogether so punctual as the French in observing the laws of comedy, yet our errors are so few and little, and those things wherein

we excel them so considerable, that we ought, of right, to be preferred before them. But what will Lisideius say if they themselves acknowledge that they are too strictly tied up by those laws, for breaking which he has blamed the English? I will allege Corneille's words, as I find them in the end of his discourse of the three unities, *Il est facile aux spéculatifs d'être sévères, &c.*, "'Tis easy for speculative persons to judge severely, but if they would produce to public view ten or twelve pieces of this nature, they would, perhaps, give more latitude to the rules than I have done, when, by experience, they had known how much we are limited and constrained by them, and how many beauties of the stage they banished from it." To illustrate a little what he has said:—By their servile observations of the unities of time and place, and integrity of scenes, they have brought upon themselves that dearth of plot and narrowness of imagination which may be observed in all their plays. How many beautiful accidents might naturally happen in two or three days which cannot arrive with any probability in the compass of twenty-four hours? There is time to be allowed, also, for maturity of design, which amongst great and prudent persons, such as are often represented in tragedy, cannot with any likelihood of truth be brought to pass at so short a warning. Farther; by tying themselves strictly to the unity of place and unbroken scenes, they are forced many times to omit some beauties which cannot be shown where the act began; but might, if the scene were interrupted, and the stage cleared, for the persons to enter in another place; and, therefore, the French poets are often forced upon absurdities: for if the act begins in a chamber, all the persons in the play must have some business or other to come thither, or else they are not to be shown that act; and sometimes their characters are very unfitting to appear there: as, suppose it were the king's

bedchamber, yet the meanest man in the tragedy must come and despatch his business there, rather than in the lobby or the courtyard (which is fitter for him), for fear the stage should be cleared, and the scenes broken.

‘ Many times they fall by it into a greater inconvenience, for they keep their scenes unbroken, and yet change the place : as in one of their newest plays, where the act begins in a street. There a gentleman is to meet his friend ; he sees him, with his man, coming out from his father’s house ; they talk together, and the first goes out ; the second, who is a lover, has made an appointment with his mistress ; she appears at the window, and then, we are to imagine, the scene lies under it. This gentleman is called away, and leaves his servant with his mistress ; presently her father is heard from within ; the young lady is afraid the servingman should be discovered, and thrusts him in through a door, which is supposed to be her closet. After this the father enters to the daughter, and now the scene is in a house, for he is seeking, from one room to another for this poor Philipin, or French Diego, who is heard from within, drolling and breaking a miserable conceit upon his sad condition. In this ridiculous manner the play goes forward, the stage being never empty all the while : so that the street, the window, the two houses, and the closet are made to walk about, and the persons to stand still. Now, what, I beseech you, is more easy than to write a regular French play, or more difficult than to write an irregular English one, like those of Fletcher, or of Shakespeare ?

‘ If they content themselves, as Corneille did, with some flat design which, like an ill riddle, is found out ere it be half proposed, such plots we can make every way regular, as easily as they ; but whenever they endeavour to rise up to any quick turns or counter-turns of plot, as some of them have attempted, since

Corneille's plays have been less in vogue, you see they write as irregularly as we, though they cover it more speciously.

'Hence the reason is perspicuous why no French plays when translated have or ever can succeed upon the English stage. For, if you consider the plots, our own are fuller of variety; if the writing, ours are more quick and fuller of spirit, and, therefore 'tis a strange mistake in those who decry the way of writing plays in verse, as if the English therein imitated the French. We have borrowed nothing from them: our plots are weaved in English looms: we endeavour therein to follow the variety and greatness of characters which are derived to us from Shakespeare and Fletcher: the copiousness and well knitting of the intrigues we have from Jonson: and for the verse itself we have English precedents of elder date than any of Corneille's plays. Not to name our old comedies before Shakespeare, which were all writ in verse of six feet or Alexandrines, such as the French now use,—I can show in Shakespeare many scenes of rhyme together, and the like in Ben Jonson's tragedies; in *Catiline* and *Sejanus* sometimes thirty or forty lines,—I mean, besides the chorus or the monologues, which, by the way, showed Ben no enemy to this way of writing, especially if you look upon his *Sad Shepherd*, which goes sometimes upon rhyme, sometimes upon blank verse, like a horse who eases himself upon trot and amble. You find him, likewise, commending Fletcher's pastoral of *The Faithful Shepherdess*, which is for the most part rhyme, though not refined to that purity to which it hath since been brought. And these examples are enough to clear us from a servile imitation of the French.

'But to return from whence I have digressed: I dare boldly affirm these two things of the English drama:—First, that we have many plays of ours as regular as any of theirs, and which, besides, have

more variety of plot and characters: and, secondly, that in most of the irregular plays of Shakespeare or Fletcher (for Ben Jonson's are for the most part regular) there is a more masculine fancy and greater spirit in all the writing than there is in any of the French.

'I could produce, even in Shakespeare's and Fletcher's works, some plays which are almost exactly formed, as *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Scornful Lady*: but because (generally speaking Shakespeare, who writ first, did not perfectly observe the laws of comedy, and Fletcher, who came nearer to perfection, yet, through carelessness, made many faults, I will take the pattern of a perfect play from Ben Jonson, who was a careful and learned observer of the dramatic laws, and, from all his comedies, I shall select *The Silent Woman*, of which I will make a short *examen*, according to those rules which the French observe.'

As Neander was beginning to examine *The Silent Woman*, Eugenius, looking earnestly upon him, 'I beseech you, Neander,' said he, 'gratify the company, and me in particular, so far, as, before you speak of the play, to give us a character of the author: and tell us, frankly, your opinion, whether you do not think all writers, both French and English, ought to give place to him?'

'I fear,' replied Neander, 'that in obeying your commands, I shall draw a little envy upon myself. Besides, in performing them, it will be first necessary to speak somewhat of Shakespeare and Fletcher, his rivals in poesy; and one of them, in my opinion, at least his equal, perhaps his superior.'

'To begin then with Shakespeare. He was the man who, of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily: when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those

who accuse him to have wanted learning give him the greater commendation : he was naturally learned : he needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature ; he looked inwards and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike : were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid : his comic wit degenerating into clenches ; his serious swelling into bombast.

‘ But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him : no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets,

Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi.

‘ The consideration of this made Mr. Hales, of Eton, say, that there was no subject of which any poet ever writ, but he would produce it much better treated of in Shakespeare ; and however others are now generally preferred before him, yet the age wherein he lived, which had contemporaries with him, Fletcher and Jonson, never equalled them to him in their esteem. And in the last King’s Court, when Ben’s reputation was at highest, Sir John Suckling, and with him the greater part of the courtiers, set our Shakespeare far above him.

‘ Beaumont and Fletcher, of whom I am next to speak, had, with the advantage of Shakespeare’s wit, which was their precedent, great natural gifts improved by study ; Beaumont especially being so accurate a judge of plays, that Ben Jonson, while he lived, submitted all his writings to his censure, and, ’tis thought, used his judgment in correcting, if not contriving all his plots. What value he had for him appears by the verses he writ to him, and therefore I need speak no farther of it. The first play which brought Fletcher and him in esteem was their

Philaster : for before that they had written two or three very unsuccessfully ; as the like is reported of Ben Jonson, before he writ *Every Man in His Humour*. Their plots were generally more regular than Shakespeare's, especially those which were made before Beaumont's death ; and they understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen much better ; whose wild debaucheries and quickness of wit in repartees no poet can ever paint as they have done. This humour, which Ben Jonson derived from particular persons, they made it not their business to describe : they represented all the passions very lively, but above all, love. I am apt to believe the English language in them arrived to its highest perfection ; what words have since been taken in are rather superfluous than necessary. Their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage ; two of theirs being acted through the year for one of Shakespeare's or Jonson's : the reason is because there is a certain gaiety in their comedies, and pathos in their more serious plays, which suits generally with all men's humours. Shakespeare's language is likewise a little obsolete, and Ben Jonson's wit comes short of theirs.

' As for Jonson, to whose character I am now arrived, if we look upon him while he was himself (for his last plays were but his dotages), I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. He was a most severe judge of himself, as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit and language, and humour also, in some measure, we had before him ; but something of art was wanting to the drama till he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavouring to move the passions : his genius was too sullen and

saturnine to do it gracefully ; especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such a height.

‘ Humour was his proper sphere ; and in that he delighted most to represent mechanic people.

‘ He was deeply conversant in the Ancients, both Greek and Latin ; and he borrowed boldly from them. There is scarce a poet or historian, among the Roman authors of those times, whom he has not translated in *Sejanus* and *Catiline*. But he has done his robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch ; and what would be theft in other poets, is only victory in him. With the spoils of these writers, he so represents old Rome to us, in its rites, ceremonies, and customs, that if one of their own poets had written either of his tragedies, we had seen less of it than in him. If there was any fault in his language, ’twas that he weaved it too closely and laboriously in his serious plays. Perhaps, too, he did a little too much *Romanize* our tongue, leaving the words which he translated almost as much Latin as he found them : wherein, though he learnedly followed the idiom of their language, he did not enough comply with ours.

‘ If I would compare him with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him, the more correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit. Shakespeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets ; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing ; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare. To conclude of him : as he has given us the most correct plays, so in the precepts which he has laid down in his *Discoveries* we have as many and profitable rules for perfecting the stage as any wherewith the French can furnish us.

‘ Having thus spoken of this author, I proceed to the examination of his comedy, *The Silent Woman*.

EXAMEN OF *The Silent Woman*

‘ To begin, first, with the length of the action : it is so far from exceeding the compass of a natural day, that it takes not up an artificial one. ’Tis all included in the limits of three hours and a half ; which is no more than is required for the presentment on the stage : a beauty perhaps not much observed. If it had, we should not have looked upon the Spanish translation of *Five Hours* with so much wonder. The scene of it is laid in London : the latitude of place is almost as little as you can imagine ; for it lies all within the compass of two houses ; and, after the first act, in one. The continuity of scenes is observed more than in any of our plays, excepting his own *Fox* and *Alchemist*. They are not broken above twice or thrice at most in the whole comedy : and in the two best of Corneille’s plays, *The Cid* and *Cinna*, they are interrupted once a-piece. The action of the play is entirely one, the end or aim of which is the setting of Morose’s estate on Dauphine. The intrigue of it is the greatest and most noble of any pure unmixed comedy in any language : you see in it many persons of various characters and humours, and all delightful.

‘ As first, Morose, or an old man, to whom all noise but his own talking is offensive. Some, who would be thought critics, say, this humour of his is forced : but to remove that objection, we may consider him, first, to be naturally of a delicate hearing, as many are to whom all sharp sounds are unpleasant : and secondly, we may attribute much of it to the peevishness of his age, or the wayward authority of an old man in his own house, where he may make himself obeyed ; and this the poet seems to allude to in his name Morose. Besides this, I am assured from divers persons that Ben Jonson was actually acquainted with such a man, one altogether as ridiculous as he is here

represented. Others say, it is not enough to find one man of such an humour: it must be common to more, and the more common, the more natural. To prove this, they instance in the best of comical characters, Falstaff. There are many men resembling him; old, fat, merry, cowardly, drunken, amorous, vain, and lying. But to convince these people, I need but tell them, that humour is the ridiculous extravagance of conversation, wherein one man differs from all others. If then it be common, or communicated to many, how differs it from other men's? or what indeed causes it to be ridiculous, so much as the singularity of it? As for Falstaff, he is not properly one humour, but a miscellany of humours or images drawn from so many several men: that wherein he is singular is his wit, or those things he says, *præter expectatum*, unexpected by the audience; his quick evasions, when you imagine him surprised: which, as they are extremely diverting of themselves, so receive a great addition from his person; for the very sight of such an unwieldy old debauched fellow is a comedy alone.—And here, having a place so proper for it I cannot but enlarge somewhat upon this subject of humour, into which I am fallen.

'The Ancients had little of it in their comedies, for the τὸ γελοῖον of the old comedy, of which Aristophanes was chief, was not so much to imitate a man, as to make the people laugh at some odd conceit, which had commonly somewhat of unnatural or obscene in it. Thus, when you see Socrates brought upon the stage, you are not to imagine him made ridiculous by the imitation of his actions, but rather, by making him perform something very unlike himself; something so childish and absurd, as, by comparing it with the gravity of the true Socrates, makes a ridiculous object for the spectators. In the new comedy which succeeded, the poets sought, indeed, to express the ἥθος, as in their tragedies, the πάθος of

Humour

mankind. But this $\gamma\theta\omicron\varsigma$ contained only the general characters of men and manners ; as old men, lovers, servingmen, courtizans, parasites, and such other persons as we see in their comedies : all which they made alike ; that is, one old man or father, one lover, one courtizan so like another, as if the first of them had begot the rest of every sort : *Ex homine hunc natum dicas*. The same custom they observed likewise in their tragedies.

‘ As for the French, though they have the word *humeur* among them, yet they have small use of it in their comedies or farces : they being but ill imitations of the *ridiculum*, or that which stirred up laughter in the old comedy.

‘ But among the English, ’tis otherwise : where, by humour is meant some extravagant habit, passion, or affection, particular (as I said before, to some one person, by the oddness of which, he is immediately distinguished from the rest of men ; which being lively and naturally represented, most frequently begets that malicious pleasure in the audience which is testified by laughter ; as all things which are deviations from common customs, are ever the aptest to produce it : though, by the way, this laughter is only accidental, as the person represented is fantastic or bizarre ; but pleasure is essential to it, as the imitation of what is natural : the description of these humours, drawn from the knowledge and observation of particular persons, was the peculiar genius and talent of Ben Jonson, to whose play, I now return.

‘ Besides Morose, there are, at least, nine or ten different characters and humours in *The Silent Woman* : all which persons have several concernments of their own ; yet are all used by the poet to the conducting of the main design to perfection. I shall not waste time in commending the writing of this play ; but I will give you my opinion, that there is more wit and acuteness of fancy in it, than in any of

Ben Jonson's. Besides that, he has here described the conversation of gentlemen, in the persons of True-wit and his friends, with more gaiety, air and freedom than in the rest of his comedies. For the contrivance of the plot, 'tis extreme, elaborate, and yet withal, easy. For the λύσις, or untying of it, 'tis so admirable, that, when it is done, no one of the audience would think the poet could have missed it; and yet, it was concealed so much before the last scene, that any other way would sooner have entered into your thoughts.

'But I dare not take upon me to commend the fabric of it, because it is altogether so full of art, that I must unravel every scene in it to commend it as I ought. And this excellent contrivance is still the more to be admired, because 'tis comedy where the persons are only of common rank, and their business private, not elevated by passions or high concernments as in serious plays. Here every one is a proper judge of all he sees; nothing is represented but that with which he daily converses; so that by consequence all faults lie open to discovery, and few are pardonable. 'Tis this which Horace has judiciously observed:

*Creditur, ex medio quia res arcessit, habere
Sudoris minimum; sed habet Comedia tanto
Plus oneris, quanto veniæ minus.*

But our poet, who was not ignorant of these difficulties, had prevailed himself of all advantages, as he who designs a large leap, takes his rise from the highest ground. One of these advantages is that which Corneille has laid down as the greatest which can arrive to any poem, and which he himself could never compass above thrice in all his plays; viz., the making choice of some signal and long-expected day, whereon the action of the play is to depend. This day was that designed by Dauphine, for the settling of his

uncle's estate upon him ; which, to compass, he contrives to marry him. That the marriage had been plotted by him long beforehand is made evident by what he tells True-wit, in the second act, that in one moment he had destroyed what he had been raising many months.

' There is another artifice of the poet, which I cannot here omit, because, by the frequent practice of it in his comedies, he has left it to us almost as a rule ; that is, when he has any character or humour, wherein he would show a *coup de maître* or his highest skill, he recommends it to your observation by a pleasant description of it, before the person first appears. Thus in *Bartholomew Fair*, he gives you the pictures of Numps and Cokes, and in this, those of Daw, Lafoole, Morose, and the Collegiate Ladies ; all of which you hear described before you see them. So that before they come upon the stage you have a longing expectation of them, which prepares you to receive them favourably, and when they are there, even from their first appearance, you are so far acquainted with them that nothing of their humour is lost to you.

' I will observe yet one thing further of this admirable plot : the business of it rises in every act. The second is greater than the first ; the third than the second, and so forward to the fifth. There, too, you see, till the very last scene, new difficulties arising to obstruct the action of the play ; and when the audience is brought into despair that the business can naturally be effected, then and not before, the discovery is made. But that the poet might entertain you with more variety all this while, he reserves some new characters to show you, which he opens not till the second and third act : in the second, Morose, Daw, the Barber, and Otter ; in the third the Collegiate Ladies : all which he moves afterwards in by-walks or underplots, as diversions to the main design, lest it should grow tedious, though they are still naturally

joined with it, and somewhere or other subservient to it. Thus, like a skilful chess-player, by little and little, he draws out his men, and makes his pawns of use to his greater persons.

‘ If this comedy and some others of his were translated into French prose (which would now be no wonder to them, since Molière has lately given them plays out of verse, which have not displeased them), I believe the controversy would soon be decided betwixt the two nations, even making them the judges. But we need not call our heroes to our aid. Be it spoken to the honour of the English, our nation can never want in any age such who are able to dispute the empire of wit with any people in the universe. And though the fury of a civil war, and power for twenty years together abandoned to a barbarous race of men, enemies of all good learning, had buried the Muses under the ruins of monarchy ; yet, with the restoration of our happiness, we see revived poesy lifting up its head, and already shaking off the rubbish which lay so heavy on it. We have seen, since His Majesty’s return, many dramatic poems which yield not to those of any foreign nation, and which deserve all laurels but the English. I will set aside flattery and envy it : it cannot be denied but we have had some little blemish, either in the plot or writing of all those plays which have been made within these seven years ; and perhaps there is no nation in the world so quick to discern them, or so difficult to pardon them, as ours ; yet, if we can persuade ourselves to use the candour of that poet, who, though the most severe of critics, has left us this caution, by which to moderate our censures—

— ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
Offendar maculis ;——

if, in consideration of their many and great beauties,

we can wink at some slight and little imperfections ; if we, I say, can be thus equal to ourselves, I ask no favour from the French. And if I do not venture upon any particular judgment of our late plays, 'tis out of the consideration which an ancient writer gives me : *vivorum, ut magna admiratio, ita censura, difficilis* ; betwixt the extremes of admiration and malice, 'tis hard to judge uprightly of the living. Only, I think it may be permitted me to say, that as it is no lessening to us, to yield to some plays, and those not many, of our own nation, in the last age, so can it be no addition, to pronounce of our present poets, that they have far surpassed all the Ancients, and the modern writers of other countries.'

This, my Lord, was the substance of what was then spoke, on that occasion ; and Lisideius, I think, was going to reply, when he was prevented thus by Crites :

' I am confident,' said he, ' the most material things that can be said have been already urged on either side : if they have not, I must beg of Lisideius, that he will defer his answer till another time : for I confess I have a joint quarrel to you both, because you have concluded without any reason given for it, that rhyme is proper for the stage. I will not dispute how ancient it hath been among us to write this way : perhaps our ancestors knew no better till Shakespeare's time. I will grant it was not altogether left by him ; and that Fletcher and Ben Jonson used it frequently in their pastorals, and sometimes in other plays. Farther,—I will not argue whether we received it originally from our own countrymen, or from the French : for that is an inquiry of as little benefit as theirs, who, in the midst of the Great Plague were not so solicitous to provide against it, as to know whether we had it from the malignity of our own air or by transportation from Holland. I have therefore only to affirm that it is not allowable in

serious plays : for comedies, I find you already concluding with me. *Quite begins* ✓

' To prove this, I might satisfy myself to tell you, how much in vain it is for you to strive against the stream of the people's inclination, the greatest part of whom are prepossessed, so much with those excellent plays of Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Ben Jonson, which have been written out of rhyme, that except you could bring them such as were written better in it, and those, too, by persons of equal reputation with them, it will be impossible for you to gain your cause with them, who will still be judges. This it is to which, in fine, all your reasons must submit. The unanimous consent of an audience is so powerful, that even Julius Cæsar (as Macrobius reports of him), when he was Perpetual Dictator, was not able to balance it on the other side ; but when Laberius, a Roman knight, at his request, contended in the *Mime* with another poet, he was forced to cry out, *Etiam favente me victus es Laberi*. But I will not, on this occasion, take the advantage of the greater number, but only urge such reasons against rhyme as I find in the writings of those who have argued for the other way. ✓

' First, then, I am of opinion, that rhyme is unnatural in a play, because dialogue there is presented as the effect of sudden thought : for a play is the imitation of Nature, and since no man, without premeditation, speaks in rhyme, neither ought he to do it on the stage. This hinders not but the fancy may be there elevated to a higher pitch of thought than it is in ordinary discourse ; for there is a probability that men of excellent and quick parts may speak noble things *extempore*, but those thoughts are never fettered with the numbers, or sound of verse, without study, and therefore it cannot be but unnatural to present the most free way of speaking, in that which is the most constrained. For this reason, says Aristotle, 'tis best to write tragedy in that kind of verse which is

the least such, or which is nearest prose ; and this, among the Ancients, was the Iambic, and with us is blank verse, or the measure of verse kept exactly, without rhyme. These numbers, therefore, are fittest for a play ; the others for a paper of verses or a poem : blank verse being as much below them as rhyme is improper for the drama ; and, if it be objected that neither are blank verses made *extempore*, yet, as nearest Nature, they are still to be preferred. But there are two particular exceptions which many, beside myself, have had to verse ; by which it will appear yet more plainly how improper it is in plays.

‘ And the first of them is grounded upon that very reason, for which some have commended rhyme : they say, the quickness of repartees in argumentative scenes, receives an ornament from verse. Now, what is more unreasonable than to imagine that a man should not only light upon the wit, but the rhyme too, upon the sudden ? This nicking of him, who spoke before, both in sound and measure, is so great a happiness that you must, at least, suppose the persons of your play to be born poets,

———Arcades omnes
Et cantare pares et respondere parati

they must have arrived to the degree of *quicquid conabar dicere*, to make verses, almost whether they will or not. If they are anything below this, it will look rather like the design of two, than the answer of one : it will appear that your actors hold intelligence together ; that they perform their tricks, like fortune-tellers, by confederacy. The hand of art will be too visible in it, against that maxim of all professions,—*Ars est celare artem* ; that it is the greatest perfection of art to keep itself undiscovered. Nor will it serve you to object, that however you manage it, ’tis still known to be a play ; and consequently the dialogue of two persons, understood to be the labour of one

poet. For a play is still an imitation of Nature : we know we are to be deceived and we desire to be so ; but no man ever was deceived, but with a probability of truth ; for who will suffer a gross lie to be fastened on him ? Thus, we sufficiently understand that the scenes which represent cities and countries to us, are not really such, but only painted on boards and canvas : but shall that excuse the ill painture or designment of them ? Nay rather, ought they not to be laboured with so much the more diligence and exactness, to help the imagination ? since the mind of man does naturally tend to, and seek after truth ; and therefore the nearer anything comes to the imitation of it, the more it pleases.

‘ Thus, you see, your rhyme is incapable of expressing the greatest thoughts, naturally, and the lowest, it cannot, with any grace : for what is more unbecoming the majesty of verse, than to call a servant, or bid a door be shut in rhyme ? And yet, this miserable necessity you are forced upon. But verse, you say, circumscribes a quick and luxuriant fancy, which would extend itself too far, on every subject, did not the labour which is required to well-turned and polished rhyme, set bounds to it.

‘ Yet this argument, if granted, would only prove that we may write better in verse, but not more naturally. Neither is it able to evince that : for he who wants for judgment to confine his fancy, in blank verse, may want it as much in rhyme ; and he who has it, will avoid errors in both kinds. Latin verse was as great a confinement to the imagination of those poets, as rhyme to ours ; and yet, you find Ovid saying too much on every subject. *Nescivit* (says Seneca) *quod bene cessit relinquere* : of which he gives you one famous instance in his description of the deluge.

Omnia pontus erat, deerant quoque litora ponto.

Now all was sea, nor had that sea a shore.

Thus Ovid's fancy was not limited by verse ; and Virgil needed not verse to have bounded his.

‘ In our own language, we see Ben Jonson confining himself to what ought to be said, even in the liberty of blank verse : and yet Corneille, the most judicious of the French poets, is still varying the same sense a hundred ways, and dwelling eternally upon the same subject, though confined by rhyme. Some other exceptions I have to verse ; but since these I have named are for the most part, already public, I conceive it reasonable they should first be answered.’

‘ It concerns me less than any,’ said Neander (seeing he had ended) ‘ to reply to this discourse, because when I should have proved that verse may be natural in plays, yet I should always be ready to confess that those which I have written in this kind, come short of that perfection which is required.

‘ Yet since you are pleased I should undertake this province, I will do it, though, with all imaginable respect and deference both to that person from whom you have borrowed your strongest arguments, and to whose judgment, when I have said all, I finally submit. But before I proceed to answer your objections, I must first remember you, that I exclude all comedy from my defence ; and next, that I deny not but blank verse may be also used : and content myself only to assert that in serious plays, where the subject and characters are great, and the plot unmixed with mirth which might allay or divert these concernments which are produced, rhyme is there, as natural and more effectual than blank verse.

‘ And now, having laid down this as a foundation—to begin with Crites,—I must crave leave to tell him that some of his arguments against rhyme reach no farther than from the faults or defects of ill rhyme to conclude against the use of it in general. May not I conclude against blank verse by the same reason ? If the words of some poets who write in it are either

ill-chosen or ill-placed, which makes not only rhyme, but all kinds of verse, in any language, unnatural, shall I, for their vicious affectation, condemn those excellent lines of Fletcher, which are written in that kind? Is there anything in rhyme more constrained, than this line in blank verse?—

I heaven invoke, and strong resistance make ;

where you see both the clauses are placed unnaturally ; that is, contrary to the common way of speaking and that without the excuse of a rhyme to cause it : yet you would think me very ridiculous if I should accuse the stubbornness of blank verse for this, and not rather the stiffness of the poet.

‘ Therefore, Crites, you must either prove that words, though well chosen and duly placed, yet render not rhyme natural in itself ; or that, however natural and easy the rhyme may be, yet it is not proper for a play. If you insist upon the former part, I would ask you what other conditions are required to make rhyme natural in itself, besides an election of apt words, and a right disposing of them? For the due choice of your words expresses your sense naturally, and the due placing them adapts the rhyme to it. If you object that one verse may be made for the sake of another, though both the words and rhyme be apt, I answer it cannot possibly so fall out ; for either there is a dependence of sense betwixt the first line and the second, or there is none ; if there be that connection, then, in the natural position of the words, the latter line must, of necessity, flow from the former ; if there be no dependence, yet still the due ordering of words makes the last line as natural in itself as the other : so that the necessity of a rhyme never forces any but bad or lazy writers to say what they would not otherwise.

‘ ‘Tis true there is both care and art required to

write in verse. A good poet never concludes upon the first line till he has sought out such a rhyme as may fit the senses already prepared to heighten the second : many times the close of the sense falls into the middle of the next verse, or farther off, and he may often prevail himself of the same advantages in English which Virgil had in Latin—he may break off in the hemistich, and begin another line. Indeed, the not observing these two last things makes plays which are writ in verse so tedious ; for though, most commonly, the sense is to be confined to the couplet, yet nothing that does *perpetuo tenore fluere*, run in the same channel, can please always. 'Tis like the murmuring of a stream, which, not varying in the fall, causes at first attention, at last, drowsiness. Variety of cadences is the best rule ; the greatest help to the actors, and refreshment to the audience.

' If then verse may be made natural in itself, how becomes it improper to a play ? You say, the stage is the representation of Nature, and no man, in ordinary conversation, speaks in rhyme. But you foresaw, when you said this, that it might be answered—neither does any man speak in blank verse, or in measure without rhyme. Therefore you concluded, that which is nearest Nature is still to be preferred. But you took no notice that rhyme might be made as natural as blank verse by the well placing of the words, &c. All the difference between them, when they are both correct, is the sound in one which the other wants ; and if so, the sweetness of it, and all the advantages resulting from it which are handled in the preface to *The Rival Ladies*, will yet stand good. As for that place of Aristotle where he says, plays should be writ in that kind of verse which is nearest prose, it makes little for you, blank verse being, properly, but measured prose.

' Now measure alone, in any modern language, does not constitute verse : those of the Ancients, in Greek

and Latin, consisted in quantity of words and a determinate number of feet. But when, by the inundations of the Goths and Vandals into Italy, new languages were brought in, and barbarously mingled with the Latin, of which the Italian, Spanish, French, and ours (made out of them, and the Teutonic) are dialects, a new way of poesy was practised,—new, I say, in those countries, for in all probability, it was that of the conquerors in their own nations. This new way consisted in measure or number of feet, and rhyme; the sweetness of rhyme and observation of accent supplying the place of quantity in words, which could neither exactly be observed by those barbarians who knew not the rules of it, neither was it suitable to their tongues as it had been to the Greek and Latin. No man is tied in modern poesy to observe any farther rules in the feet of his verse but that they be dissyllables, whether Spondee, Trochee, or Iambic, it matters not; only he is obliged to rhyme: neither do the Spanish, French, Italian, or Germans acknowledge at all, or very rarely, any such kind of poesy as blank verse among them. Therefore, at most, 'tis but a poetic prose, a *sermo pedestris*, and, as such, most fit for comedies, where I acknowledge rhyme to be improper. Farther, as to that quotation of Aristotle, our couplet verses may be rendered as near prose as blank verse itself, by using those advantages I lately named (as breaks in an hemistich, or running the sense into another line), thereby making art and order appear as loose and free as nature: or not tying ourselves to couplets strictly, we may use the benefit of the Pindaric way practised in *The Siege of Rhodes*, where the numbers vary and the rhyme is disposed carelessly, and far from often chiming. Neither is that other advantage of the Ancients to be despised, of changing the kind of verse, when they please, with the change of the scene, or some new entrance; for they confine not themselves always to iambics, but

extend their liberty to all lyric numbers, and sometimes even to hexameter. But I need not go so far to prove that rhyme, as it succeeds to all other offices of Greek and Latin verse, so especially to this of plays, since the custom of all nations at this day confirms it. All the French, Italian, and Spanish tragedies are generally writ in it ; and, sure the universal consent of the most civilised parts of the world ought, in this, as it doth in other customs, include the rest.

‘ But perhaps you may tell me I have proposed such a way to make rhyme natural, and, consequently proper, to plays, as is unpracticable ; and that I shall scarce find six or eight lines together in any play where the words are so placed and chosen as is required to make it natural.—I answer, no poet need constrain himself at all times to it. It is enough he makes it his general rule : for I deny not but sometimes there may be a greatness in placing the words otherwise ; and sometimes they may sound better : sometimes also the variety itself is excuse enough. But if, for the most part, the words be placed as they are in the negligence of prose, it is sufficient to denominate the way practicable ; for we esteem that to be such, which, in the trial, oftener succeeds than misses. And thus far you may find the practice made good in many plays ; where you do not, remember still, that if you cannot find six natural rhymes together, it will be as hard for you to produce as many lines in blank verse, even among the greatest of our poets, against which I cannot make some reasonable exception.

‘ And this, sir, calls to my remembrance the beginning of your discourse where you told us we should never find the audience favourable to this kind of writing till we could produce as good plays in rhyme as Ben Jonson, Fletcher, and Shakespeare had writ out of it. But it is to raise envy to the living to compare them with the dead. They are honoured and almost adored by us, as they deserve ; neither do I

know any so presumptuous of themselves as to contend with them. Yet give me leave to say thus much, without injury to their ashes, that not only we shall never equal them, but they could never equal themselves, were they to rise and write again. We acknowledge them our fathers in wit, but they have ruined their estates themselves before they came to their children's hands. There is scarce a humour, a character, or any kind of plot which they have not blown upon. All comes sullied or wasted to us; and were they to entertain this age, they could not make so plenteous treatments out of such decayed fortunes. This, therefore, will be a good argument to us either not to write at all, or to attempt some other way. There are no bays to be expected in their walks; *tentanda via est, qua me quoque possum tollere humo.*

' This way of writing in verse they have only left free to us; our age is arrived to a perfection in it which they never knew, and which (if we may guess by what of theirs we have seen in verse, as *The Faithful Shepherdess* and *Sad Shepherd*) 'tis probable they never could have reached. For the genius of every age is different; and though ours excel in this, I deny not but that to imitate Nature in that perfection which they did in prose is a greater commendation than to write in verse exactly. As for what you have added—that the people are not generally inclined to like this way,—if it were true, it would be no wonder that betwixt the shaking off an old habit, and the introducing of a new, there should be difficulty. Do we not see them stick to Hopkins and Sternhold's Psalms, and forsake those of David, I mean Sandys his translation of them? If by the people you understand the multitude, the οἱ πολλοί, 'tis no matter what they think: they are sometimes in the right, sometimes in the wrong: their judgment is a mere lottery. *Est ubi plebs recte putat, est ubi peccat.* Horace says it of the vulgar, judging poesy. But if you mean

the mixed audience of the populace and the noblesse, I dare confidently affirm that a great part of the latter sort are already favourable to verse ; and that no serious plays, written since the King's return, have been more kindly received by them than *The Siege of Rhodes*, the *Mustapha*, *The Indian Queen*, and *Indian Emperor*.

' But I come now to the inference of your first argument. You said, the dialogue of plays is presented as the effect of sudden thought, but no one speaks suddenly or *ex tempore* in rhyme ; and you inferred from thence, that rhyme, which you acknowledge to be proper to epic poesy, cannot equally be proper to dramatic, unless we could suppose all men born so much more than poets, that verses should be made in them, not by them.

' It has been formerly urged by you and confessed by me that since no man spoke any kind of verse *ex tempore*, that which was nearest Nature was to be preferred. I answer you, therefore, by distinguishing betwixt what is nearest to the nature of comedy, which is the imitation of common persons and ordinary speaking, and what is nearest the nature of a serious play : this last is, indeed, the representation of Nature, but 'tis Nature wrought up to a higher pitch. The plot, the characters, the wit, the passions, the descriptions are all exalted above the level of common converse, as high as the imagination of the poet can carry them, with proportion to verisimilitude. Tragedy, we know, is wont to image to us the minds and fortunes of noble persons, and to portray these exactly ; heroic rhyme is nearest Nature ; as being the noblest kind of modern verse.

*Indignatur enim privatis, et prope socco,
Dignis carminibus narrari cœna Thyestæ.*

says Horace : and in another place,

Effutire leves indigna tragœdia versus.

' Blank verse is acknowledged to be too low for a poem, nay more, for a paper of verses ; but if too low for an ordinary sonnet, how much more for tragedy, which is by Aristotle, in the dispute betwixt the epic poesy and the dramatic, for many reasons he there alleges, ranked above it ?

' But setting this defence aside, your argument is almost as strong against the use of rhyme in poems, as in plays : for the epic way is everywhere interlaced with dialogue or discursive scenes : and, therefore, you must either grant rhyme to be improper there, which is contrary to your assertion, or admit it into plays, by the same title which you have given it to poems. For though tragedy be justly preferred above the other, yet there is a great affinity between them, as may easily be discovered in that definition of a play, which Lysideius gave us. The *genus* of them is the same,—a just and lively image of human nature, in its actions, passions, and traverses of fortune : so is the end,—namely, for the delight and benefit of mankind. The characters and persons are still the same, viz., the greatest of both sorts : only the manner of acquainting us with those actions, passions, and fortunes, is different. Tragedy performs it *vivâ voce*, or by action in dialogue : wherein it excels the epic poem, which does it chiefly by narration, and therefore is not so lively an image of human nature. However, the agreement betwixt them is such, that if rhyme be proper for one, it must be for the other. Verse, 'tis true, is not " the effect of sudden thought " ; but this hinders not, that sudden thought may be represented in verse, since those thoughts are such as must be higher than Nature can raise them without premeditation, especially to a continuance of them, even out of verse : and consequently, you cannot imagine them to have been sudden either in the poet or the actors. A play, as I have said, to be like Nature, is to be set above it ; as statues which are placed on high

are made greater than the life, that they may descend to the sight in their just proportion.

‘ Perhaps I have insisted too long upon this objection ; but the clearing of it will make my stay shorter on the rest. You tell us, Crites, that rhyme appears most unnatural in repartees or short replies : when he who answers (it being presumed he knew not what the other would say) yet makes up that part of the verse which was left incomplete, and supplies both the sound and measure of it. This, you say, looks rather like confederacy of two, than the answer of one.

‘ This, I confess, is an objection which is in every one’s mouth who loves not rhyme ; but suppose, I beseech you, the repartee were made only in blank verse, might not part of the same argument be turned against you ?—for the measure is as often supplied there as it is in rhyme : the latter half of the hemistich as commonly made up, or a second line subjoined as a reply to the former ; which any one leaf in Jonson’s plays will sufficiently [make] clear to you. You will often find in the Greek tragedians, and in Seneca, that when a scene grows up into the warmth of repartees, which is the close fighting of it, the latter part of the trimeter is supplied by him who answers : and yet it was never observed as a fault in them, by any of the ancient or modern critics.

‘ The case is the same in our verse, as it was in theirs : rhyme to us, being in lieu of quantity to them. But if no latitude is to be allowed a poet, you take from him, not only his license of *quidlibet audendi*, but you tie him up in a straiter compass than you would a philosopher. This is indeed *Musas colere severiores*. You would have him follow Nature, but he must follow her on foot : you have dismounted him from his Pegasus.

‘ But you tell us, this supplying the last half of a verse, or adjoining a whole second to the former, looks more like the design of two, than the answer of one.

Suppose we acknowledge it : how comes this confederacy to be more displeasing to you than in a dance which is well contrived ? You see there the united design of many persons, to make up one figure : after they have separated themselves in many petty divisions, they rejoin, one by one, into a gross : a confederacy is plain amongst them, for chance could never produce anything so beautiful ; and yet there is nothing in it that shocks your sight. I acknowledge the hand of Art appears in repartee, as of necessity it must in all kind of verse. But there is, also, the quick and poignant brevity of it (which is a high imitation of Nature, in those sudden gusts of passion) to mingle with it ; and this, joined with the cadency and sweetness of the rhyme, leaves nothing in the soul of the hearer to desire. 'Tis an art which appears ; but it appears only like the shadowings of painture, which, being to cause the rounding of it, cannot be absent : but while that is considered, they are lost : so while we attend to the other beauties of the matter, the care and labour of the rhyme is carried from us, or at least drowned in its own sweetness, as bees are sometimes buried in their honey. When a poet has found the repartee, the last perfection he can add to it is to put it into verse. However good the thought may be, however apt the words in which 'tis couched, yet he finds himself at a little unrest while rhyme is wanting : he cannot leave it till that comes naturally, and then is at ease, and sits down contented. ✓

' From replies, which are the most elevated thoughts of verse, you pass to those which are most mean, are common with the lowest of household conversation. In these you say, the majesty of verse suffers. You instance in the calling of a servant, or commanding a door to be shut, in rhyme. This, Crites, is a good observation of yours, but no argument. For it proves no more but that such thoughts should be waived, as often as may be, by the address of the poet. But

suppose they are necessary in the places where he uses them, yet there is no need to put them into rhyme. He may place them in the beginning of a verse, and break it off as unfit, when so debased, for any other use ; or, granting the worst,—that they require more room than the hemistich will allow, yet, still, there is a choice to be made of the best words, and least vulgar, provided they be apt to express such thoughts. Many have blamed rhyme in general for this fault, when the poet, with a little care, might have redressed it. But they do it with no more justice than if English poesy should be made ridiculous for the sake of the Water-poet's rhymes. Our language is noble, full, and significant ; and I know not why he who is master of it may not clothe ordinary things in it as decently as the Latin, if he use the same diligence in his choice of words : *Delectus verborum origo est eloquentiæ*. This was the saying of Julius Cæsar—one so curious in his, that none of them can be changed but for a worse. One would think, *unlock the door* was a thing as vulgar as could be spoken ; and yet Seneca could make it sound high and lofty in his Latin :

Reserate clusos regii postes Laris.

Set wide the palace gates.

‘ But I turn from this exception, both because it happens not above twice or thrice in any play that those vulgar thoughts are used ; and then too, were there no other apology to be made, yet the necessity of them which is alike in all kind of writing, may excuse them. Besides that the great eagerness and precipitation with which they are spoken, makes us rather mind the substance than the dress ; that for which they are spoken, rather than what is spoke. For they are always the effect of some hasty concernment, and something of consequence depends upon them.

X Thus, Crites, I have endeavoured to answer your objections : it remains only that I should vindicate an argument for verse which you have gone about to overthrow. It had formerly been said that the easiness of blank verse renders the poet too luxuriant but that the labour of rhyme bounds and circumscribes an over fruitful fancy ; the sense there being commonly confined to the couplet, and the words so ordered that the rhyme naturally follows them, not they the rhyme. To this you answered, that it was no argument to the question in hand ; for the dispute was not which way a man may write best, but which is most proper for the subject on which he writes.

‘ First, give me leave, sir, to remember you that the argument against which you raised this objection was only secondary : it was built on this hypothesis—that to write in verse was proper for serious plays. Which supposition being granted (as it was briefly made out in that discourse, by showing how verse might be made natural), it asserted that this way of writing was a help to the poet’s judgment, by putting bounds to a wild, overflowing fancy. I think, therefore, it will not be hard for me to make good what it was to prove on that supposition. But you add, that were this let pass, yet he who wants judgment in the liberty of his fancy may as well show the defect of it when he is confined to verse ; for he who has judgment will avoid errors, and he who has it not will commit them in all kinds of writing.

‘ This argument, as you have taken it from a most acute person, so I confess it carries much weight in it : but by using the word judgment here indefinitely, you seem to have put a fallacy upon us. I grant he who has judgment, that is so profound, so strong, so infallible a judgment that he needs no help to keep it always poised and upright, will commit no faults, either in rhyme or out of it. And, on the other extreme, he who has a judgment so weak and crazed

that no helps can correct or amend it, shall write scurvily out of rhyme and worse in it. But the first of these judgments is nowhere to be found, and the latter is not fit to write at all. To speak, therefore, of judgment as it is in the best poets; they who have the greatest proportion of it want other helps than from it within. As, for example, you would be loath to say that he who was endued with a sound judgment had no need of history, geography, or moral philosophy, to write correctly. Judgment is indeed the master workman in a play, but he requires many subordinate hands, many tools to his assistance. And verse I affirm to be one of these. 'Tis a rule and line by which he keeps his building compact and even, which otherwise lawless imagination would raise either irregularly or loosely: at least, if the poet commits errors with this help, he would make greater and more without it:—'tis, in short, a slow and painful, but the surest kind of working. Ovid, whom you accuse for luxuriancy in verse, had, perhaps been farther guilty of it had he writ in prose. And for your instance of Ben Jonson, who, you say, writ exactly, without the help of rhyme: you are to remember 'tis only an aid to a luxuriant fancy, which his was not: as he did not want imagination, so none ever said he had much to spare. Neither was verse then refined so much to be a help to that age as it is to ours. Thus, then, the second thoughts being usually the best, as receiving the maturest digestion from judgment, and the last and most mature product of those thoughts being artful and laboured verse, it may well be inferred that verse is a great help to a luxuriant fancy; and this is what that argument, which you opposed, was to evince.'

Neander was pursuing this discourse so eagerly that Eugenius had called to him twice or thrice ere he took notice that the barge stood still, and that they were at the foot of Somerset-stairs, where they had

appointed it to land. The company were all sorry to separate so soon (though a great part of the evening was already spent), and stood awhile looking back on the water, upon which the moonbeams played, and made it appear like floating quicksilver ; at last they went up, through a crowd of French people, who were merrily dancing in the open air, and nothing concerned for the noise of guns which had alarmed the town that afternoon. Walking thence together to the Piazza, they parted there ; Eugenius and Lisideius to some pleasant appointment they had made, and Crites and Neander to their several lodgings.

NOTES

ABSALOM AND ACHITOPHEL

For the biblical parallel, which in itself was no novelty, see 2 Samuel xiv-xvii. David is Charles; Absalom the Duke of Monmouth; Achitophel, the Earl of Shaftesbury; Zimri, the Duke of Buckingham.

PART I

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| <p>7. Heaven's own heart: 1 Samuel xiii. 14.</p> <p>11. Michal: Catherine of Braganza.</p> <p>21. conscious destiny: the fact that he was destined to greatness, and was conscious of it.</p> <p>39. Amnon's murder: 'The reference has never been satisfactorily explained' (Collins).</p> <p>42. Sion: London.</p> <p>43. sincerely: truly.</p> <p>45. the Jews: the English.</p> <p>51. Adam-wits: wits as little restricted in their liberty as Adam.</p> <p>59. Hebron: the Continent or Brussels, where Charles received the invitation to return to London.</p> <p>72. dishonest: 'ugly, unseemly.'</p> <p>86. Jebusites: Roman Catholics.</p> <p>88. chosen people: the Church of England.</p> <p>104. Jewish Rabbins: Church of England theologians.</p> <p>108. that Plot: the Popish Plot, 1678, of Titus Oates.</p> <p>119. taste: a reference to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.</p> <p>172. shapeless lump: the second Earl of Shaftesbury was certainly not this. Dryden</p> | <p>is laughing at the lack of purpose in all Shaftesbury's toil.</p> <p>175. triple bond: Triple alliance of England, Sweden, and Holland against France, broken by the declaration of war against Holland, 1672.</p> <p>195. cockle: a weed that grows among corn, especially wheat.</p> <p>197. and . . . song: there would have been one song the less sung in praise of Heaven.</p> <p>204. manifest: proved guilty.</p> <p>264. Gath: Brussels.</p> <p>270. Jordan's strand: Charles's landing at Dover.</p> <p>310. metal: mettle, spirit.</p> <p>336. popularity: in a way that would win popular favour.</p> <p>344. prevents: anticipates.</p> <p>353. brother: James, Duke of York.</p> <p>369. scanted: made small, restricted.</p> <p>373. Him . . . found: a suggestion of Milton's Satan (Ver-rall).</p> <p>419. piety: affection for your father.</p> <p>461. prevail: avail.</p> <p>513. Solymæan rout: the London rabble.</p> <p>519. hot Levites: Presbyterian</p> |
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ministers who had been displaced by the Act of Uniformity.

523. **Sanhedrin**: Parliament.

525. **Aaron's race**: the clergy.

544. **Zimri**: George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham. The picture given here is a close likeness of the man, with very little exaggeration.

574. **Balaam**: the Earl of Huntingdon.

Caleb: Lord Grey of Werk, said to have been so cold as to allow Monmouth to intrigue with his wife.

575-6. **canting Nadab . . . paschal lamb**: Lord Howard of Escricke. There was a story of his profaning the sacrament of Holy Communion.

581. **Jonas**: Sir William Jones (1631-82), an eminent lawyer, 'who directed the Popish Plot prosecutions'.

585. **Shimei**: Slingsby Bethel (1617-97), Sheriff of London 1680. He was a republican, and at the first election was unable to serve as Sheriff owing to his refusal to take the oath commanded by the Corporation Act.

595. **a vare**: a wand.

617. **Rechabite**: Jeremiah xxxv. 5-6.

632. **Corah**: Titus Oates (1649-1705). Responsible for the story about the supposed conspirators in the Popish Plot. For a long time he was fully believed and received a large pension. In 1685, however, he was found guilty of perjury, and severely punished. There is a full description of his appearance in Roger North's *Examen*.

676. **Agag's murder**: Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, the

magistrate to whom Titus Oates swore to the truth of his narrative, was found dead in a ditch soon afterwards. Suspicion at the time fell on the Catholics, but Dryden suggests his murder was at the instigation of Oates.

697. **Hybla**: a place in Sicily, famous for its honey.

710. **Bathsheba**: Louise de Querouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth, the king's mistress.

738. **Issachar**: Thomas Thynne of Langleat, called 'Tom of Ten Thousand' because of his wealth. First he attached himself to the Duke of York, but afterwards crossed over to Monmouth's party.

786. The greater popular favour becomes, the sooner it is dissipated.

817. **Barzillai**: James Butler, Duke of Ormond. He was a loyal follower of the Stuarts, was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland during the Civil War, went into exile with Charles II, and was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland again after the Restoration.

825. **practised**: frequented.

830. **more than half a father's name**: six of his eight sons were dead.

835. **honour won**: the eldest son, Thomas, Earl of Ossory, died in 1680 at the age of 46, after distinguished service in the war against Holland and France.

864. **Zadoc**: William Sancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury.

866. **Sagan**: Henry Compton, Bishop of Oxford, and afterwards of London.

868. **Him of the western dome**: John Dolben, Archbishop of York, 1683. The western

dome is Westminster Abbey, where John Dolben was Dean.

870. **The prophet's sons:** the Westminster boys.

877. **Adriel:** John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, and afterwards Duke of Buckingham, author of *An Essay on Satire* and *An Essay on Poetry*.

881. The Duke of Monmouth was in great disfavour in 1679 for refusing to go abroad.

882. **Jotham:** George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, author of *The Character of a Trimmer*, the man who steers a middle

course between Whigs and Tories.

888. **Hushai:** Laurence Hyde, afterwards Earl of Rochester.

899. **Amiel:** Edward Seymour, 1633-1708, Speaker of the House of Commons, 1673-79. He was head of the house of Somerset, as the Duke of Somerset was from a younger branch of the family.

919. **to plume:** to take away.

967. **brave:** bravo, desperado.

982. Genesis xxvii. 22.

987. Proverbs xxx. 15, 16.

PART II

The extract given was all that Dryden contributed. The rest was by Nahum Tate. The poem appeared in November, 1682.

321. **Judas:** Robert Ferguson, 'the Plotter', Monmouth's evil genius, who played a part in every treasonable scheme against the last two Stuarts.

330. **Phaleg:** James Forbes, a Nonconformist divine.

Hebronite: Scotsman.

353. **Ben Jochanan:** the Rev. Samuel Johnson. In his *Julian the Apostate*, 1682, he attacked popery as a modern paganism, portraying the Duke of York under the guise of the Apostate.

396. **Balak:** Dr. Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury and English Historian. His chief work is *A History of His Own Time*.

405. **Mephibosheth:** a poetaster called Samuel Pordage.

407. **Uzza:** John Hall, a minor wit of the time.

412. **Doeg:** Elkanah Settle, poetaster and dramatist, at one time almost a rival of Dryden in drama. He was a supporter of the Whigs and had recently written *Absalom Senior*, a reply to *Absalom and Achitophel I*.

444. **transprose:** Settle's poem had a second title *Achitophel Transposed*.

446. **Heaven's gate, etc.:** a reference to the opening lines of Settle's poem.

459. **Og:** Thomas Shadwell, 1642-92. Dramatist and Poet Laureate.

THE MEDAL

Absalom and Achitophel I did not serve to bring about Shaftesbury's downfall as Dryden had hoped, for a week after the publication Shaftesbury was freed from the charge of high treason and set at liberty. The Whigs, overjoyed, struck a medal in his honour,

with Shaftesbury's head on the one side, and the motto *Laelamur* on the reverse.

This poem is said to have been suggested to Dryden by Charles II himself.

3. **Polish**: it was a stock joke that Shaftesbury expected to be elected King of Poland in 1674, when John Sobieski was chosen.
41. **interlope**: trade without a licence.
52. **reconciled him**: at the Restoration Shaftesbury, previously a Parliamentarian, was one of the twelve chosen to invite the King back to England. His rewards (l. 54) were: in 1661 he was made Baron Ashley, and Chancellor of the Exchequer; in 1672, Earl of Shaftesbury and Lord Chancellor.
65. **triple hold**: see note to *Absalom and Achitophel I*, 175.
- 75-81. The Declaration of Indulgence 1672 was so unpopular that Charles withdrew it the following year, and afterwards dismissed Shaftesbury, who then joined the Whigs in opposition.
94. **Pindaric**: it was then commonly thought that there was no rule or order in Pindar's odes. Here as an example is a line of fourteen syllables.
96. **Phocion** was executed for treason 317 B.C.
Socrates on a charge of impiety 399 B.C.
119. **Jehu**: Shaftesbury.
149. **witnesses**: those called to give evidence against Shaftesbury.
- 151-2. The witnesses were really Shaftesbury's agents, but when they fastened on him they broke their original allegiance, and forswore justice and religion.
164. **our oracle to inquire**: to be inquired of, as an oracle.
182. **head**: Sir John Moore, Lord Mayor of London, 1681.
hands: Thomas Pilkington and Samuel Shute, Sheriffs, 1681, and both Whigs.
240. **Croatian**: a synonym for barbarous.
270. **stum**: new wine, must.
294. **swelling poison**: Shaftesbury suffered from an abscess.
317. **Collatine**: Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus, whose wife Lucretia was ravished by Sextus Tarquinius. This led to the expulsion of the Tarquins from Rome in 509 B.C., and Collatinus had to go too because of his name Tarquinius. By Collatine Dryden means Monmouth.
323. **Pudet**, etc.: 'It is shameful that these scandals could have been uttered by you, and could not have been refuted' (Ovid, *Met.*, I, 758); 'nobis' is altered to 'vobis', meaning the Whigs.

MAC FLECKNOE

Richard Flecknoe (?-1678) was an Irish priest, a traveller and author. The satire is really aimed at Thomas Shadwell, dramatist and poet laureate. Originally Shadwell was on good terms with Dryden, who collaborated with him in *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco* (1674) and wrote a prologue for his *True*

Widow (1678); but politics turned their friendship to hostility. It is usually said that Shadwell replied to Dryden's *Medal* with *The Medal of John Bayes*, and that this scurrilous production inspired Dryden to satirize Shadwell here and in the *Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel*.

25. **goodly fabric**: Shadwell's appearance.

29. **Heywood and Shirley**: Dryden hardly does these Elizabethan dramatists justice.

33. **Norwich drugget**: Norwich was long noted for woollen manufactures.

36. **King John of Portugal**: an allusion to Flecknoe's description of how he 'past Court Doctor' in the 'composative part of music' at the court of King John of Portugal.

42. **Epsom blankets**: meaning that Shadwell's play, *Epsom Wells*, was a very poor one.

43. **Arion**: he so charmed the dolphins with his music that one of them carried him on its back to land.

47. **Pissing Alley**: 'a passage from the Strand to Holywell Street'.

52. **threshing**: beating time.

53. **St. André**: a French dancing-master at the time.

54. **Psyche**: an opera by Shadwell.

57. **Singleton**: John Singleton, musician.

59. **Villerius**: a character in the *Siege of Rhodes*, an opera by Davenant.

64. **Augusta**: London. Augusta was a common name for cities founded by the Emperor Augustus.

67. **Barbican**: 'a street in Aldersgate'.

70. **a nursery**: a theatre in Golden Lane, Barbican, where

boys and girls made their first attempts on the stage.

74. **Maximin**: the hero of Dryden's play *Tyrannic Love*.

77. **Simkin**: 'a character in an interlude'; the exact reference is not known.

79. **clinches**: puns.

80. **Panton**: a famous punster.

87. **Misers**: *The Miser*, by Shadwell, adapted from Molière's *L'Avare*.

88. **Humorist**: Shadwell's comedy *The Humorists*.

89. **Raymond**: a character in *The Humorists*.

Bruce: a character in Shadwell's *Virtuoso*.

96. **Ogleby**: John Ogilby, translator. Dryden laughs at his translation of Vergil again in *The Preface to the Fables*.

99. **Herringman**: publisher, mainly of poetry and drama.

102. **Ascanius**: son of Aeneas; see *Aeneid*.

106. See Livy, xxi. 1.

116. **Love's Kingdom**: the only play of Flecknoe's ever performed.

124. **Romulus**: see Plutarch's *Life*.

145. **George**: Sir George Etherege, 1635-91, dramatist.

146-7. **Dorimant**, **Loveit** and **Fopling** are characters from *The Man of Mode*, 1676; **Colley** and **Cockwood** from *The Comical Revenge*, 1664, both comedies by Etherege.

157. **Sedley**: Sir Charles Sedley, dramatist and poet, 1639-1701. He wrote the

prologue to Shadwell's *Epsom Wells*.

162. **Sir Formal**: a character in Shadwell's *Virtuoso*.

166. **Jonson**: Shadwell took Ben Jonson as his model.

173. **Prince Nicander and Psyche**: characters in Shadwell's *Psyche*.

180. **humours**: Shadwell's imitation of Ben Jonson's 'humours.' Shadwell claimed to have portrayed new humours.

186. **tympany**: an empty swelling.

188. **kilderkin**: a cask for liquids, of 16-18 gallons; used figuratively.

199. **wings and altars**: referring to a fashion among some Elizabethan and Caroline wits of arranging verses in the form of a lozenge, an altar, a pair of wings.

204. **Bruce and Longville**: in Shadwell's *Virtuoso*, Bruce and Longville put an end to Sir Formal's speeches by dropping him through a trap door.

RELIGIO LAICI

18. **interfering**: striking against each other.

21. **Stagirite**: Aristotle, born at Stageira in Chalcidice.

42. **Deist**: Deism was a rationalistic, anti-Christian movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, distinguished by its antagonism to revealed religion. Its main points are noted in this passage, 42-61.

71. **discourse**: argument.

75. **oracles renowned**: renowned means celebrated.

78. Job xi. 7, 8.

213. **the Egyptian bishop**: St. Athanasius (296-373), Bishop of Alexandria. He was the chief upholder of orthodoxy against Arianism (see l. 220), which denied the consubstantiality of Christ.

228. **thou, my friend**: 'These verses were written for an ingenious gentleman my friend, upon his translation of *The Critical History of The Old Testament*, composed by the learned Father Simon' (Dryden, Preface). The translator appears to have been called Henry Dickinson.

241. **Junius, Tremellius**: Calvinistic divines who made a translation of the Scriptures with commentaries on which Père Simon makes learned criticisms (Scott, x. 45 n.).

282. **such an omniscient Church we wish indeed**: lines such as these go far to explain Dryden's subsequent conversion to Roman Catholicism.

291. **Esdras**: *The Books of Esdras* are a compilation from various sources, including some of the books of the *Old Testament*.

312. **Socinian**: Socinianism resembled Arianism, but differed in detail. The Unitarians have embraced some of its principles.

335. **disinterested**: the earlier form of 'disinterested', which would not be metrical here.

346. **Pelagians**: the Pelagian heresy (fourth century) claimed that man was not necessarily sinful, but had power to choose between good and evil.

provoke: appeal.

381. **on content:** without examining what was given them.
 393. **on record:** about the facts in the writings recorded.
 456. **Tom Sternhold:** joint

author with John Hopkins of a popular translation of the Psalms, 1549.

Sha—ll: Shadwell.

TO LADY CASTLEMAINE

Barbara Palmer, afterwards Duchess of Cleveland, gave Dryden help and encouragement at the time of the unsuccessful production of *The Wild Gallant*, 1663.

10. **while they:** this line is from Lucan, *Pharsalia*, i. 128. Cato is a type of independent judgment, whose approval justifies the lost cause.
 24. **Grandison:** Lady Castlemaine was daughter of William Villiers, Lord Grandison, killed at the siege of Bristol, 1643.

34. **prevent:** anticipate.

40-1. **Grecian poet:** a reference to the use Euripides made of the *deus ex machina* in his tragedies. Dryden evidently thought Euripides paid little attention to plot-construction.

TO MR. CONGREVE

The Double Dealer was his second play (1693).

7. **Janus:** the god who presided over the beginning of everything. He was supposed to have introduced agriculture into Italy.
 29. **Etherege his courtship:** Etherege's courtliness.
 35. **Fabius . . . Scipio:** Publius Cornelius Scipio was given proconsular power in Spain in 210 B.C. at the age of 24, and was irregularly elected Consul in 205 B.C. Fabius Maximus, the one Roman general left who had commanded without disaster against Hannibal, was then over 80.
 39. **Romano . . . Raphael:** Raphael (1483-1520) was, on the contrary, older than Giulio Romano (1492-1546).

48. **Tom the First, Tom the second:** when at the Revolution Dryden lost the Poet Laureateship and the office of Historiographer Royal, Thomas Shadwell was appointed; and after Shadwell's death in 1692, Nahum Tate was made Poet Laureate, and Thomas Rymer (Tom the second) Historiographer.

49. **my Patron:** the Earl of Dorset. As Lord Chamberlain he appointed the Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal. Dryden acknowledges his help after the Revolution in his *Discourse on Satire*, which is addressed to the Earl of Dorset.

72. Congreve edited Dryden's Plays, 1717.

TO JOHN DRIDEN

41. John Driden was the poet's first cousin, being second son of Sir John Driden, eldest brother of the poet's father.
82. **Guibbons:** Dr. Gibbons. Dryden mentions him gratefully in the postscript to his *Virgil*.
83. **Maurus:** Sir Richard Blackmore (*d.* 1729) attacked Dryden in the Preface to his *Prince Arthur, an Heroic Poem*. This is a fourteen-syllable line.
85. **Maro:** Virgil; referring again to Blackmore's epic.
87. **Milbourn:** Luke Milbourn (1649–1720), author of *Notes on Dryden's Virgil*, 1698.
107. **Garth, generous as his muse:** Sir Samuel Garth, author of *The Dispensary*. His generosity consisted in issuing medicines to the poor free. A friend of Dryden's, though a Whig.
134. **sabbath year:** every seventh year, when there was no reaping or sowing, Leviticus xxv. 1–7.
142. **have peace embraced:** Peace of Ryswick 1697.
152. **Namur subdued,** 1695.
160. **Persian king:** Darius. See Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*.
163. **the son of Jove:** Alexander the Great.
165. **Hannibal recalled:** Hannibal held his own for fourteen years in Italy, but was defeated at Zama (202 B.C.) on his return to Africa, and Carthage was made tributary to Rome.
183. **When the Gauls came:** the tradition was that when the Gauls captured Rome in 390 B.C., Camillus was appointed dictator and forced them to relinquish the ransom.
188. **grandsire:** Sir Robert Beville, maternal grandfather to John Driden of Chester-ton, imprisoned for resisting Charles I's illegal attempts to raise money.

TO THE MEMORY OF MR. OLDHAM

John Oldham (1653–83) was a satirist.

21. Notice Dryden's beautiful use of the Alexandrine.
23. **Marcellus:** son of Octavia, sister of the Emperor Augustus. He was a young man of great promise, and was destined to succeed Augustus, but died, at the age of 20, of malaria. See Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi, 860–866.

PROLOGUE TO THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

31. **suffragating:** voting, assenting.
37. **Thebes:** Cambridge, where Dryden took his degree.
38. **Athens:** Oxford.

PROLOGUE TO AURENG-ZEBE

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| <p>8. Rhyme: <i>Aureng-Zebe</i> was Dryden's last tragedy in heroic couplets.</p> <p>11. verse: heroic couplets.</p> <p>17. less polish'd, more unskill'd:
The lack of polish of the</p> | <p>Elizabethans is a frequent topic with Dryden. In the <i>Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age</i> he excuses Shakespeare's faults on the grounds that he 'wanted the benefit of converse'.</p> |
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TO THE MEMORY OF MRS. ANNE KILLIGREW

Mrs. Anne Killigrew (1660-85) was a poetess and painter. She became Maid of Honour to Mary of Modena, Duchess of York, and died in 1685, of smallpox.

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| <p>23. traduction: the doctrine that the soul, as well as the body, is propagated.</p> <p>26. father: Rev. Henry Killigrew (1613-1700), wrote Latin verse, and <i>Conspiracy</i>, a tragedy.</p> <p>43. in trine: planets 120 degrees apart, a favourable sign.</p> <p>63. lubrique: wanton.</p> <p>68. Arethusian: the fountain Arethusa, named from the nymph pursued by Alpheus, was a symbol of pastoral poetry.</p> <p>82. Epictetus with his lamp:</p> | <p>Epictetus (c., A.D. 50-120) lived so simply that he is said to have contented himself with an earthenware lamp after the theft of his iron one.</p> <p>127. Dryden alludes to Mrs. Killigrew's paintings of James II and his Queen.</p> <p>162. Orinda: Mrs. Katherine Philips, among whose friends were the Duke of Ormond, Dryden, Cowley, etc. Like Mrs. Killigrew she wrote poems, and she also died of smallpox at an early age, 32.</p> <p>165. Her brother, Henry, afterwards admiral. Died 1712.</p> |
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THE TWENTY-NINTH ODE OF THE THIRD BOOK OF HORACE

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| <p>1. Descended: The Ode is addressed to Maecenas, Horace's patron. The Cilnii, who were the ancestors of Maecenas, were chieftains in Etruria.</p> <p>4. piercing: 'The cask is as yet unbroached.'</p> <p>7. Syrian oil: Horace has 'balanus', the fruit of a palm from which a balsam was extracted.</p> | <p>27. Persian carpet: 'aulaeis', really tapestry.</p> <p>Tyrian loom: The Tyrian (Purple) coverings of the couches.</p> <p>30. The Syrian Star: 'the star that rises before the Dog-star.'</p> <p>43. quiverbearing: the peoples of the East.</p> |
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A SONG FOR ST. CECILIA'S DAY

St. Cecilia was patron saint of Music.

17. **Jubal**: Genesis iv. 21.
chorded shell: the lyre.
 47. **mend**: 'add to'.
 48. **Orpheus** played on the lute
 so wonderfully that beasts
 and trees followed him.

50. **sequacious**: following.

63. **untune**: 'destroy the harmony', just as at the beginning of the poem, music had brought harmony into the universe.

ALEXANDER'S FEAST

1. **for Persia won**: at the battle of Arbela, 331 B.C. The story that Thais at the banquet at Persepolis instigated Alexander to burn the palace of the Persian kings is from Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*.
 20. **Timotheus**: a musician of Thebes.
 28. **belied**: 'disguised'.

53. **hautboys**: oboes, wood-wind instruments.

97. **Lydian**: a Greek name for soft music.

133. **rear**: 'lift erect'.

157. **organs**: The word was originally plural, as the instrument is composed of many pipes.

AN ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY
ANALYSIS

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V. Conclusion, the party returns, 192.35-193.12.

119.1. **Memorable day:** 3rd June, 1665, when James, Duke of York, won a great battle off Lowestoft against the Dutch.

119.20. **Eugenius:** Lord Buckhurst, to whom Dryden dedicated the Essay.

Crites: Dryden's brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard. (see Introduction, p. 14)

Lisideius: Sir Charles Sedley.

Neander: Dryden himself.

121.5. **conceit:** fanciful notion.

121.17. **Quem in concione, etc.:**

'A man whom we ourselves saw in the public assembly, when a bad poet of the common people had put a book in his hand, because he had made an epigram on him, with every other verse too long, he immediately ordered some of the things which he was willing to sell to be given him as a reward on condition of not writing anything more about him for the future' (Cicero, *Pro Archia*, x).

121.32. **one of them:** Dr. Robert Wild, 1609-79.

121.33. **clenches:** puns.

121.36: **Clevelandism:** named after John Cleveland, 1613-1658, minor poet.

122.9. **My other extremity of poetry:** Richard Flecknoe (See note to Mac Flecknoe.)

122.26. **Pauper videri, etc.:** 'Cinna wants to appear poor and is poor.' Martial *Epigrams*, viii, 19.

123.10. **Withers:** George Wither (1588-1667) synonymous with dullness in Restoration times. But his earlier verses are often exquisite, e.g. 'Shall I, wasting in despair, etc.'

123.16. **candles' ends:** an old form of auction; the last bid before the candle went out or before it burned down to a mark previously made by the auctioneer claimed the article.

123.24. **Qui Bavium, etc.:** 'He who does not hate Bavius'

- verse, may love thine, Maevius' (Virgil, *Eclogues*, iii, 90). Bavius and Maevius were two poetasters of Virgil's time.
- 123.28. **Nam quos, etc.:** 'For as to those we despise, we despise their fame also'.
- 123.35. **Pace vestra, etc.:** 'Give me leave with your good favour to say that you first lost all the fine graces of speech' (Petronius, *Satyricon*, ii).
- 124.13. **Indignor quidquam, etc.:** 'I am disgusted that anything should be found fault with, not because it may be thought to be coarsely or inelegantly composed, but because it is modern' (Horace, *Epistles*, II, i, 76, 77).
- 124.16. **Si melior dies, etc.:** 'If length of time makes poems better, as it does wine, I should like to know how many years will confer a value on writings' (ibid., II, i, 34, 35).
- 125.25. **yet living:** The *Essay* was published 1668. Cowley died 1667, Waller in 1687, Denham in 1669.
- 126.16. **a genere et fine:** 'concerning the kind and the aim'; i.e. did not distinguish it from other writings.
- 126.29. **Thespis to Aristophanes:** from *circ.* 550 B.C. to 380 B.C.
- 127.20. **Lycophron:** Greek tragedian, *circ.* 260 B.C.
- 127.26. **Alit aemulatio, etc.:** 'Emulation encourages genius, and sometimes jealousy and sometimes admiration sets energy on fire.' (Velleius Paterculus, *Hist. Rom.*, I, 17).
- 131.10-16. This sentence is taken from Corneille's *Discours des Trois Unités*.
- 132.13. **Macrobius:** at the beginning of the fifth century A.D., discussed Virgil in his *Conviviorum Saturnaliorum Libri Septem*.
- 133.38. **Audita, etc.:** 'We admire things we have heard more willingly than things we have seen; we think of the present with jealousy and of the past with admiration; we expect to be surpassed by the former but instructed by the latter'. Paterculus (*Hist. Rom.*, ii, 92).
- 134.15. **Aristotle:** It was not Aristotle, but J. C. Scaliger, the sixteenth-century Italian critic, who divided the parts of a play in this way.
- 135.6. **Neu brevior quinto, etc.:** The full sentence from Horace's *Ars Poetica* is, 'Let a play which would be inquired after, and though seen represented afresh, be neither shorter nor longer than the fifth act.' Horace does not limit it to comedy.
- 135.23 τῶν πραγμάτων σύνθεσις, 'the arrangement of the incidents.'
- 135.30. **Greeklings:** 'Which of the Greeklings durst ever give precepts to Demosthenes?' (Ben Jonson, *Discoveries*).
- 136.4. **good cheap:** on such good terms.
- 136.17. **Juno Lucina:** 'Juno Lucina bring help'. Juno Lucina was the goddess who brought the child to light.
- 137.12. **Unity of place:** The unity of place is first found in the Italian critic Castelvetro, who published a translation of and commentary on

Aristotle's *Poetics* in 1570. Aristotle and Horace do not mention the unity of place, but Sir Philip Sidney does in his *Apology for Poetry*, 1583.

140.9. **Tandem ego**, etc.: 'Must I be deprived of her then, if necessary, for a whole three days?' 'Pooh, a whole eternity of three days!' (Terence, *Eun.*, 223, 4).

140.21. **Sed proavi**, etc.: 'But our ancestors commended both the numbers and the wit of Plautus too tamely, I will not say foolishly, admiring each of them' (Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 270-2).

140.28. **Multa renascentur**, etc.: 'Many words shall revive, which have now fallen off; and many which are now in esteem shall fall off, if it be the will of custom, in whose hands is the decision and the right and the standard of language.' (ibid., 70-2).

140.36. **Mistake**, etc.: '(The earth) shall pour thee forth Egyptian beans with smiling acanthus intermixed' (Virgil, *Eclogues*, iv, 20).

141.2. **Mirantur**, etc.: 'The waves admire, and the woods unaccustomed to the sight survey with wonder the far-gleaming shields of heroes, and the painted keels floating on the river' (*Aeneid*, viii, 91-3).

141.6. **Si verbo**, etc.: 'If boldness in a word be allowed, I will not fear to say the Palatine of the highest Heaven' (Ovid, *Met.*, I, 175, 6). The Emperor Augustus lived on the Palatine Hill.

141.10. **Et longas**, etc.: 'And the Capitol will gaze at the long processions' (ibid., 561).

141.29. **Had Cain been Scot: Rebel Scot**, 63, 4, by Cleveland.

141.31. **Si sic**, etc.: 'If so he had said all' (Juvenal, *Satires*, x, 123, 4).

141.34. **For beauty: Rupertism**, 39, 40, by Cleveland.

white powder: arsenic.

142.17. **Medea**: The Latin tragedy *Medea* is Seneca's.

142.19. **Omne genus**, etc.: 'Tragedy surpasses in dignity every kind of writing' (Ovid, *Tristia*, ii, 381).

142.22. **Myrrha**: see Ovid, *Met.*, x.

Caunus and Biblis: ibid, ix.

143.8. ζωὴ καὶ ψυχὴ: life and soul.

143.36. **Sum pius Aeneas**, etc.: 'I am pious Aeneas, renowned by fame above the stars' (*Aeneid* I, 378).

144.11. **Si foret**, etc.: 'If his life had been postponed to this age of ours' (Horace, *Satires* i, 10, 68).

144.18. **quos Libitina sacravit**: 'Whom Libitina has hallowed' (Horace, *Epistles* II, 1, 49). Libitina was originally goddess of gardens and pleasure, but later became regarded as the goddess of burial.

145.10. **bad Englishmen**: a reference to the Civil War.

146.31. **Red Bull**: a low-class theatre, shut down after the Restoration.

146.32. **Atque ursum**, etc.: 'In the midst of the play they

- call for a bear and boxers' (Horace, *Epistles* II, i, 185, 6).
- 146.34. **admiration**: Pity and fear are the effects of tragedy, according to Aristotle. Admiration (wonder) was added by Renaissance critics.
- 147.12. **Ex noto**, etc.: This is usually taken to refer not to the story, as Dryden takes it, but to the style: 'I will aim at a style of verse composed artistically from familiar materials' (*Ars Poetica*, 240).
- 147.20. **Atque ita mentitur**, etc.: 'And forms his fictions in such a way, so intermingles the false and the true, that the middle is not inconsistent with the beginning, nor the end with the middle' (ibid., 151.2).
- 148.14. **Quodcunque**, etc.: 'Whatever you show me in this manner, I detest, not being able to believe it' (ibid., 188).
- 148.17. τὰ ἔτυμα: the truth. ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοία: the appearance of truth.
- 149.3. **Rollo**: the sub-title of *The Bloody Brother* (1639), possibly by Fletcher.
- 149.5. **Herodian**: a Greek historian of Rome.
- 150.16. **protatic**: introductory; persons who are not in the plot, but give information at the beginning of the play.
- 152.36. **Segnius irritant**, etc.: 'The things which enter by the ear affect the mind more slowly than such as are submitted to the faithful eyes . . . You must not however bring upon the stage things fit only to be acted behind the scenes, and you must take away from public view many actions,
- which presently the eloquence of the actor on the stage may relate' (Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 180-7).
- 153.32. **King and No King**: by Beaumont and Fletcher, 1611.
- 154.20. **The Scornful Lady**: by Beaumont and Fletcher, 1616.
- 155.7. **says Corneille**: in the *Discours des Trois Unités*.
- 155.24. **Sed ut**, etc.: 'But as at first we are excited to catch up with those we consider to be better, so when we have given up hope that they can be surpassed or equalled, application fades away with hope; because forsooth it is impossible to attain, the attempt is relinquished; . . . leaving unpractised the things in which we cannot excel, we seek for some other direction in which to exert ourselves' (Paterculus, *Hist. Rom.*, i, 17).
- 157.6. **Adventures**: *Adventures of Five Hours* (1663), by Sir Samuel Tuke, from Calderon's *Escondido y la Tapada*.
- 158.24. **primum mobile**: 'Outermost sphere added in the Middle Ages to the Ptolemaic system; . . . it carried with it the contained spheres. Prime source of motion or action.'
- 158.33. **Eugenius**: really Crites.
- 159.22. **Cinna, La Mort de Pompée and Polieucte** are plays by Corneille.
- 167.14. **Quantum**, etc.: 'As the cypresses are wont to do among the pliant osiers' (Virgil, *Eclogues*, i, 26).
- 167.15. **Mr. Hales** (1584-1656): 'the ever memorable', a theological writer.

- 170.4. **an artificial one**: twelve hours.
- 170.9. **Five Hours**: see 156. 6, n.
- 171.26. τὸ γελοῖον : 'The ludicrous.'
- 171.30. **Socrates** : a reference to *The Clouds*, by Aristophanes.
- 171.38. ἦθος : character ; πάθος, emotion.
- 172.7. **Ex homine**, etc. : 'You may say he is human' (Terence, *Eun.*, 460).
- 172.16. **Humour**: has here the meaning Ben Jonson gave it.
- 173.24. **Creditur**, etc. : 'Comedy is believed to require the least pains because it fetches the subject from daily life; but the less indulgence it meets with, the more labour it requires' (Horace, *Epistles* II, i, 168).
- 175.34. **Ubi plura**, etc. : 'When the beauties predominate in a poem I will not be offended with a few faults' (*Ars Poetica*, 351).
- 176.6. **Vivorum**, etc. : 'Of the living, according as our admiration is great, so is censure difficult' (Paterculus, ii, 36).
- 176.34. **the great plague**: of 1665; at its worst in August and September.
- 177.19. **Etiam favente**, etc. : 'You are conquered, Laberius, even though under my protection.'
- 178.23. **Arcades**, etc. : 'Arcadians both, equally matched in singing and ready to answer' (Virgil, *Eclogues*, vii, 4, 5).
- 179.33. **nescivit**, etc. : 'He knew not how to leave well alone.'
- 183.2. Dryden's views on the origin of rhyme come from the Elizabethan critics, and are of course not now held to be true.
- 183.32. **Pindaric**: Pindar's Odes were supposed not to obey any laws.
- Siege of Rhodes**: 1656, by Sir William Davenant.
- 185.16. **Tentanda**, etc. : 'I too must attempt a way, by which to raise myself from the ground' (Virgil, *Georgics*, III, 8).
- 185.31. **Hopkins** (John Hopkins) and **Thomas Sternhold** were authors of a popular translation of the Psalms, 1549; **Sandys'** much better version, 1636, was not so widely popular.
- 185.37. **Est ubi**, etc. : 'Sometimes the people judge rightly, sometimes wrongly' (Horace, *Epistles* II, i, 63).
- 186.6. **Mustapha**: 1665, by Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery.
- 186.34. **Indignatur**, etc. : 'For the banquet of Thyestes will not bear to be told in familiar verses and in such as almost suit the sock (comedy)' (*Ars Poetica*, 90).
- 186.37. **Effutire**, etc. : 'It is beneath the dignity of tragedy to chatter out trifling verses' (ibid, 231).
- 188.30. **quidlibet audendi**: 'of daring to attempt anything' (ibid., 10).
- 188.32. **Musas**, etc. : 'To court the stricter Muses' (Martian *Epigrams*, ix, 11.17).

190.13. **the Water-Poet's rhymes:** John Taylor (1580-1653), 'a waterman, publican and pedestrian, who composed a vast quantity of doggerel, and became a curiosity of literature.'

190.17. **Delectus verborum**, etc. :
'Choice of words is the source of eloquence' (Cicero, *Brutus*, 72).

193.10. **Piazzæ:** on the north side of Covent Garden.

